



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

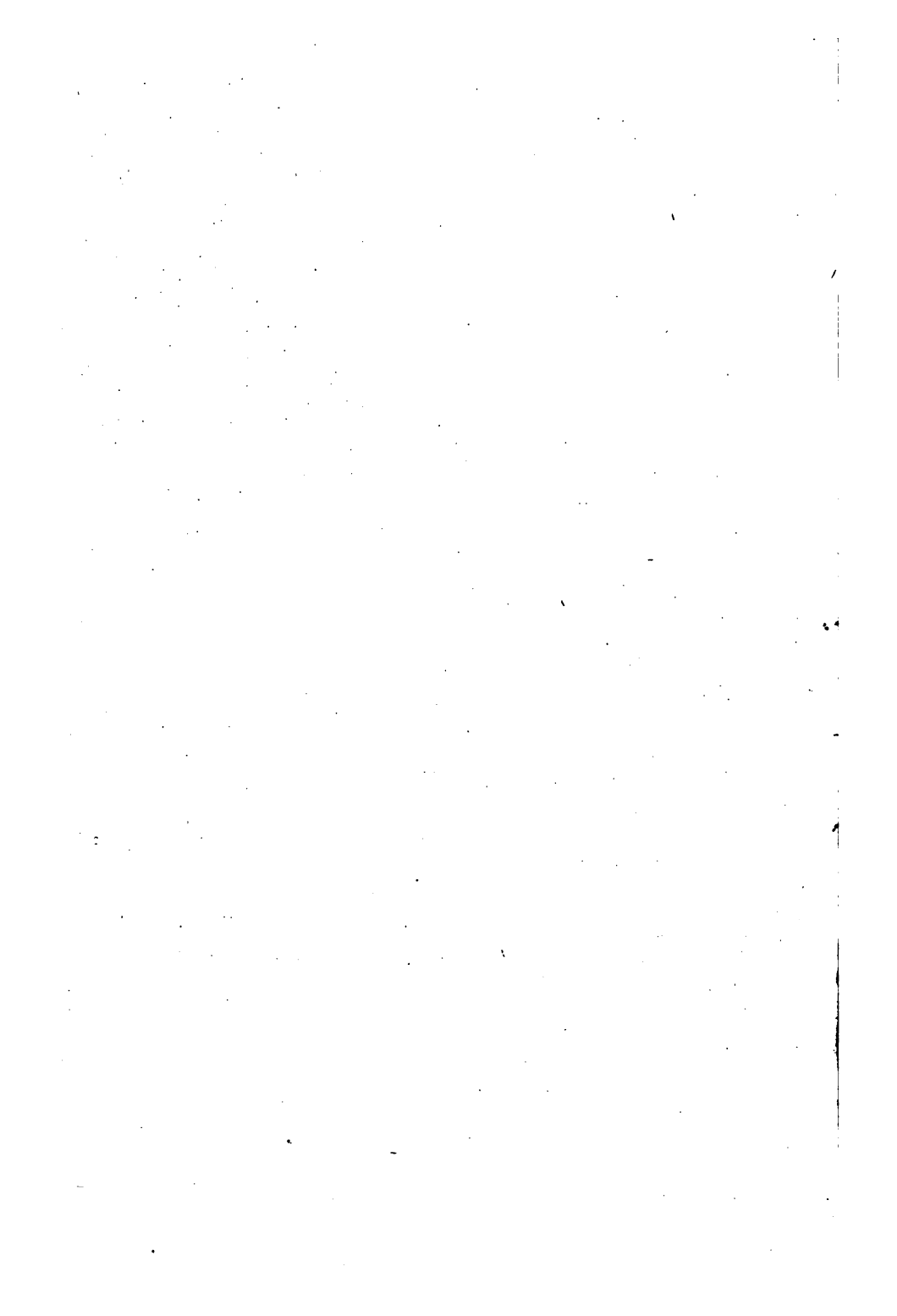
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



Good







W. CLARK RUSSELL

INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORIES



EDITED BY
WILLIAM PATTEN
A NEW COLLECTION OF
FAMOUS EXAMPLES
FROM THE LITERATURES
OF ENGLAND, FRANCE
AND AMERICA



[v. 2]
ENGLISH

P F COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

GRAD /BUHR

PN

6019

.I58

1910

v.2

Copyright, 1910

By P. F. COLLIER & Son

The use of the copyrighted stories in this collection has
been authorized in each case by their authors
or by their representatives,

BUHR/GRAD
Gift
03/14/2005



ENGLISH STORIES

THE TWO DROVERS	By Sir Walter Scott	3
MR. DEUCEACE	By W. M. Thackeray	33
THE BROTHERS	By Edward Bulwer Lytton	51
DOCTOR MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT	By Charles Dickens	77
THE CALDRON OF OIL	By Wilkie Collins	93
THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE	By Samuel Lover	115
THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY	By Charles Reade	141
THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD	By Rudyard Kipling	183
THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR	By R. L. Stevenson	209
THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE	By Sir A. Conan Doyle	233
A CHANGE OF TREATMENT	By W. W. Jacobs	253
THE STICKIT MINISTER	By S. R. Crockett	263
THE LAMMAS PREACHING	By S. R. Crockett	268
AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT	By F. Anstey	277
THE SILHOUETTES	By A. T. Quiller-Couch	289
MY BROTHER HENRY	By J. M. Barrie	297
GILRAY'S FLOWER-POT	By J. M. Barrie	301
MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE	By Charles Lever	307
THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU	By Anthony Hope Hawkins	319
THE STOLEN BODY	By H. G. Wells	335
THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS" ..	By W. Clark Russell	355
THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL	By Captain Frederick Marryat	373
THREE THIMBLES AND A PEA	By George Borrow	381

(1)

I—Vol. II

1

2

3

4

5

6



THE TWO DROVERS

By SIR WALTER SCOTT

CHAPTER I

IT WAS the day after Doune Fair when my story commences. It had been a brisk market: several dealers had attended from the northern and mid-land counties in England, and English money had flown so merrily about as to gladden the hearts of the Highland farmers. Many large droves were about to set off for England, under the protection of their owners, or of the topsmen whom they employed in the tedious, laborious, and responsible office of driving the cattle for many hundred miles, from the market where they had been purchased to the fields or farm-yards where they were to be fattened for the shambles.

The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war. It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion. They are required to know perfectly the drove-roads, which lie over the wildest tracts of the country, and to avoid as much as possible the high-ways, which distress the feet of the bullocks, and the turn-pikes, which annoy the spirit of the drover; whereas on the broad green or grey track, which leads across the pathless moor, the herd not only move at ease and without taxation, but, if they mind their business, may pick up a mouthful of food by the way. At night, the drovers usually sleep along with their cattle, let the weather be what it will; and many of these hardy men do not once rest under a roof during a journey on foot from Lochaber to Lincolnshire. They are paid very highly, for the trust reposed in of the last importance, as it depends on their prudence, vigilance, and honesty whether the cattle reach the final market in good order, and afford a profit to the grazier. But, as they maintain them-

SIR WALTER SCOTT

selves at their own expense, they are especially economical in that particular. At the period we speak of, a Highland drover was victualled for his long and toilsome journey with a few handfuls of oatmeal and two or three onions, renewed from time to time, and a ram's horn filled with whisky, which he used regularly, but sparingly, every night and morning. His dirk, or skene-dhu (i.e. black knife), so worn as to be concealed beneath the arm, or by the folds of the plaid, was his only weapon, excepting the cudgel with which he directed the movements of the cattle. A Highlander was never so happy as on these occasions. There was a variety in the whole journey which exercised the Celt's natural curiosity and love of motion; there were the constant change of place and scene, the petty adventures incidental to the traffic, and the intercourse with the various farmers, graziers, and traders, intermingled with occasional merry-makings, not the less acceptable to Donald that they were void of expense; and there was the consciousness of superior skill: for the Highlander, a child amongst flocks, is a prince amongst herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd's slothful life, so that he feels himself nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian.

Of the number who left Doune in the morning, and with the purpose we have described, not a glunamie of them all cocked his bonnet more briskly, or gartered his tartan hose under knee over a pair of more promising spigs (legs), than did Robin Oig M'Combich, called familiarly Robin Oig, that is, Young, or the Lesser Robin. Though small of stature, as the epithet Oig implies, and not very strongly limbed, he was as light and alert as one of the deer of his mountains. He had an elasticity of step which, in the course of a long march, made many a stout fellow envy him; and the manner in which he busked his plaid and adjusted his bonnet argued a consciousness that so smart a John Highlandman as himself would not pass unnoticed among the Lowland lasses. The ruddy cheek, red lips, and white teeth set off a countenance which had gained by exposure to the weather a healthful and hardy rather than a rugged hue. If Robin Oig did not laugh, or even smile, frequently, as indeed is not the practice among his countrymen, his bright eyes usually gleamed from under

THE TWO DROVERS

his bonnet with an expression of cheerfulness ready to be turned into mirth.

The departure of Robin Oig was an incident in the little town, in and near which he had many friends, male and female. He was a topping person in his way, transacted considerable business on his own behalf, and was entrusted by the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that district. He might have increased his business to any extent had he condescended to manage it by deputy; but, except a lad or two, sister's sons of his own, Robin rejected the idea of assistance, conscious, perhaps, how much his reputation depended upon his attending in person to the practical discharge of his duty in every instance. He remained, therefore, contented with the highest premium given to persons of his description, and comforted himself with the hopes that a few journeys to England might enable him to conduct business on his own account in a manner becoming his birth. For Robin Oig's father, Lachlan M'Combich, or "son of my friend" (his actual clan-surname being M'Gregor), had been so called by the celebrated Rob Roy, because of the particular friendship which had subsisted between the grandsire of Robin and that renowned cateran. Some people even say that Robin Oig derived his Christian name from one as renowned in the wilds of Loch Lomond as ever was his namesake, Robin Hood, in the precincts of merry Sherwood. "Of such ancestry," as James Boswell says, "who would not be proud?" Robin Oig was proud accordingly; but his frequent visits to England and to the Lowlands had given him tact enough to know that pretensions which still gave him a little right to distinction in his own lonely glen might be both obnoxious and ridiculous if preferred elsewhere. The pride of birth, therefore, was like the miser's treasure, the secret subject of his contemplation, but never exhibited to strangers as a subject of boasting.

Many were the words of gratulation and good-luck which were bestowed on Robin Oig. The judges commended his drove, especially Robin's own property, which were the best of them. Some thrust out their snuff-mulls for the parting pinch; others tendered the doch-an-darroch, or parting-cup.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

All cried: "Good-luck travel out with you and come home with you. Give you luck in the Saxon market—brave notes in the leabhar-dhu (black pocket-book) and plenty of English gold in the sporran" (pouch of goat-skin).

The bonny lasses made their adieus more modestly, and more than one, it was said, would have given her best brooch to be certain that it was upon her that his eye last rested as he turned towards the road.

Robin Oig had just given the preliminary "Hoo—hoo!" to urge forward the loiterers of the drove, when there was a cry behind him.

"Stay, Robin—bide a blink. Here is Janet of Toma-hourich—auld Janet, your father's sister."

"Plague on her, for an auld Highland witch and spaewife," said a farmer from the Carse of Stirling; "she'll cast some of her cantrips on the cattle."

"She canna do that," said another sapient of the same profession: "Robin Oig is no the lad to leave any of them without tying St. Mungo's knot on their tails, and that will put to her speed the best witch that ever flew over Dimayet upon a broomstick."

It may not be indifferent to the reader to know that the Highland cattle are peculiarly liable to be "taken," or infected, by spells and witchcraft, which judicious people guard against by knitting knots of peculiar complexity on the tuft of hair which terminates the animal's tail.

But the old woman who was the object of the farmer's suspicion seemed only busied about the drover, without paying any attention to the drove. Robin, on the contrary, appeared rather impatient of her presence.

"What auld-world fancy," he said "has brought you so early from the ingle-side this morning, muhme? I am sure I bid you good-even, and had your God-speed, last night."

"And left me more siller than the useless old woman will use till you come back again, bird of my bosom," said the sibyl. "But it is little I would care for the food that nourishes me, or the fire that warms me, or for God's blessed sun itself, if aught but weal should happen to the grandson of my father. So let me walk the deasil round you, that you may go safe out into the far foreign land, and come safe home."

THE TWO DROVERS

Robin Oig stopped, half-embarrassed, half-laughing, and signing to those around that he only complied with the old woman to soothe her humour. In the mean time, she traced around him, with wavering steps, the propitiation, which some have thought has been derived from the Druidical mythology. It consists, as is well known, in the person who makes the deasil walking three times round the person who is the object of the ceremony, taking care to move according to the course of the sun. At once, however, she stopped short, and exclaimed, in a voice of alarm and horror: "Grandson of my father, there is blood on your hand."

"Hush, for God's sake, aunt," said Robin Oig; "you will bring more trouble on yourself with this taishataragh (second sight) than you will be able to get out of for many a day."

The old woman only repeated, with a ghastly look: "There is blood on your hand, and it is English blood. The blood of the Gael is richer and redder. Let us see—let us——"

Ere Robin Oig could prevent her, which, indeed, could only have been by positive violence, so hasty and peremptory were her proceedings, she had drawn from his side the dirk which lodged in the folds of his plaid, and held it up, exclaiming, although the weapon gleamed clear and bright in the sun: "Blood, blood—Saxon blood again. Robin Oig M'Combich, go not this day to England!"

"Pruitt, trutt," answered Robin Oig, "that will never do neither; it would be next thing to running the country. For shame, muhme, give me the dirk. You cannot tell by the colour the difference betwixt the blood of a black bullock and a white one, and you speak of knowing Saxon from Gaelic blood. All men have their blood from Adam, muhme. Give me my skene-dhu, and let me go on my road. I should have been half-way to Stirling brig by this time. Give me my dirk, and let me go."

"Never will I give it to you," said the old woman—"never will I quit my hold on your plaid, unless you promise me not to wear that unhappy weapon."

The women around him urged him also, saying few of his aunt's words fell to the ground; and as the Lowland farmers continued to look moodily on the scene, Robin Oig determined to close it at any sacrifice.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

"Well, then," said the young drover, giving the scabbard of the weapon to Hugh Morrison, "you Lowlanders care nothing for these freats. Keep my dirk for me. I cannot give it you, because it was my father's; but your drove follows ours, and I am content it should be in your keeping, not in mine. Will this do, muhme?"

"It must," said the old woman—"that is, if the Lowlander is mad enough to carry the knife."

The strong Westlandman laughed aloud.

"Goodwife," said he, "I am Hugh Morrison from Glenae, come of the Manly Morrisons of auld langsyne, that never took short weapon against a man in their lives. And neither needed they: they had their broadswords, and I have this bit supple," showing a formidable cudgel; "for dirking ower the board, I leave that to John Highlandman. Ye needna snort, none of you Highlanders, and you in especial, Robin. I'll keep the bit knife, if you are feared for the auld spaewife's tale, and give it back to you whenever you want it."

Robin was not particularly pleased with some part of Hugh Morrison's speech; but he had learned in his travels more patience than belonged to his Highland constitution originally, and he accepted the service of the descendant of the Manly Morrisons, without finding fault with the rather depreciating manner in which it was offered.

"If he had not had his morning in his head, and been but a Dumfriesshire hog into the boot, he would have spoken more like a gentleman. But you cannot have more of a sow than a grumph. It's shame my father's knife should ever slash a haggis for the like of him."

Thus saying, but saying it in Gaelic, Robin drove on his cattle, and waved farewell to all behind him. He was in the greater haste, because he expected to join at Falkirk a comrade and brother in profession, with whom he proposed to travel in company.

Robin Oig's chosen friend was a young Englishman, Harry Wakefield by name, well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. He was nearly six feet high, gallantly formed to keep the rounds at Smithfield, or maintain the ring at a wrestling-match; and although he might

THE TWO DROVERS

have been over-matched, perhaps, among the regular professors of the fancy, yet, as a yokel or rustic, or a chance customer, he was able to give a bellyful to any amateur of the pugilistic art. Doncaster races saw him in his glory, betting his guinea, and generally successfully; nor was there a main fought in Yorkshire, the feeders being persons of celebrity, at which he was not to be seen, if business permitted. But though a "sprack" lad, and fond of pleasure and its haunts, Harry Wakefield was steady, and not the cautious Robin Oig M'Combich himself was more attentive to the main chance. His holidays were holidays indeed; but his days of work were dedicated to steady and persevering labour. In countenance and temper, Wakefield was the model of Old England's merry yeomen, whose cloth-yard shafts, in so many hundred battles, asserted her superiority over the nations, and whose good sabres, in our own time, are her cheapest and most assured defence. His mirth was readily excited; for, strong in limb and constitution, and fortunate in circumstances, he was disposed to be pleased with everything about him; and such difficulties as he might occasionally encounter were, to a man of his energy, rather matter of amusement than serious annoyance. With all the merits of a sanguine temper, our young English drover was not without his defects. He was irascible, sometimes to the verge of being quarrelsome; and perhaps not the less inclined to bring his disputes to a pugilistic decision, because he found few antagonists able to stand up to him in the boxing-ring.

It is difficult to say how Harry Wakefield and Robin Oig first became intimates; but it is certain a close acquaintance had taken place betwixt them, although they had apparently few common subjects of conversation or of interest, so soon as their talk ceased to be of bullocks. Robin Oig, indeed, spoke the English language rather imperfectly upon any other topics but stots and kyloes, and Harry Wakefield could never bring his broad Yorkshire tongue to utter a single word of Gaelic. It was in vain Robin spent a whole morning, during a walk over Minch Moor, in attempting to teach his companion to utter, with true precision, the shibboleth llhu, which is the Gaelic for a calf. From Traquair to

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Murder cairn, the hill rung with the discordant attempts of the Saxon upon the unmanageable monosyllable, and the heartfelt laugh which followed every failure. They had, however, better modes of awakening the echoes; for Wakefield could sing many a ditty to the praise of Moll, Susan, and Cicely, and Robin Oig had a particular gift at whistling interminable pibrochs through all their involutions, and, what was more agreeable to his companion's southern ear, knew many of the northern airs, both lively and pathetic, to which Wakefield learned to pipe a bass. Thus, though Robin could hardly have comprehended his companion's stories about horse-racing, and cock-fighting, or fox-hunting, and although his own legends of clan-fights and creaghs, varied with talk of Highland goblins and fairy folk, would have been caviare to his companion, they contrived nevertheless to find a degree of pleasure in each other's company, which had for three years back induced them to join company and travel together, when the direction of their journey permitted. Each, indeed, found his advantage in this companionship; for where could the Englishman have found a guide through the Western Highlands like Robin Oig M'Combich? and when they were on what Harry called the right side of the Border, his patronage, which was extensive, and his purse, which was heavy, were at all times at the service of his Highland friend, and on many occasions his liberality did him genuine yeoman's service.

CHAPTER II

Were ever two such loving friends!—
How could they disagree?
Oh, thus it was, he loved him dear,
And thought how to requite him,
And having no friend left but he,
He did resolve to fight him.

—*Duke upon Duke*

THE pair of friends had traversed with their usual cordiality the grassy wilds of Liddesdale, and crossed the opposite part of Cumberland, emphatically called The Waste.

THE TWO DROVERS

In these solitary regions the cattle under the charge of our drovers derived their subsistence chiefly by picking their food as they went along the drove-road, or sometimes by the tempting opportunity of a "start and owerloup," or invasion of the neighbouring pasture, where an occasion presented itself. But now the scene changed before them; they were descending towards a fertile and inclosed country, where no such liberties could be taken with impunity, or without a previous arrangement and bargain with the possessors of the ground. This was more especially the case, as a great northern fair was upon the eve of taking place, where both the Scotch and English drover expected to dispose of a part of their cattle, which it was desirable to produce in the market rested and in good order. Fields were therefore difficult to be obtained, and only upon high terms. This necessity occasioned a temporary separation betwixt the two friends, who went to bargain, each as he could, for the separate accommodation of his herd. Unhappily it chanced that both of them, unknown to each other, thought of bargaining for the ground they wanted on the property of a country gentleman of some fortune, whose estate lay in the neighbourhood. The English drover applied to the bailiff on the property, who was known to him. It chanced that the Cumbrian squire, who had entertained some suspicions of his manager's honesty, was taking occasional measures to ascertain how far they were well founded, and had desired that any inquiries about his inclosures, with a view to occupy them for a temporary purpose, should be referred to himself. As, however, Mr. Ireby had gone the day before upon a journey of some miles' distance to the northward, the bailiff chose to consider the check upon his full powers as for the time removed, and concluded that he should best consult his master's interest, and perhaps his own, in making an agreement with Harry Wakefield.

Meanwhile, ignorant of what his comrade was doing, Robin Oig, on his side, chanced to be overtaken by a good-looking, smart little man upon a pony, most knowingly hogged and cropped, as was then the fashion, the rider wearing tight leather breeches and long-necked bright spurs. This cavalier asked one or two pertinent questions about

SIR WALTER SCOTT

markets and the price of stock. So Robin, seeing him a well-judging, civil gentleman, took the freedom to ask him whether he could let him know if there was any grass-land to be let in that neighbourhood, for the temporary accommodation of his drove. He could not have put the question to more willing ears. The gentleman of the buckskins was the proprietor with whose bailiff Harry Wakefield had dealt, or was in the act of dealing.

"Thou art in good luck, my canny Scot," said Mr. Ireby, "to have spoken to me, for I see thy cattle have done their day's work, and I have at my disposal the only field within three miles that is to be let in these parts."

"The drove can pe gang two, three, four miles very pratty weel indeed," said the cautious Highlander; "put what would his honour pe axing for the peasts pe the head, if she was to tak the park for twa or three days?"

"We won't differ, Sawney, if you let me have six stots for winterers, in the way of reason."

"And which peasts wad your honour pe for having?"

Why, let me see—the two black—the dun one—yon doddy—him with the twisted horn—the brockit. How much by the head?"

"Ah," said Robin, "your honour is a shudge—a real shudge: I couldna have set off the pest six peasts petter mysell, me that ken them as if they were my pairns, puir things."

"Well, how much per head, Sawney," continued Mr. Ireby.

"It was high markets at Doune and Falkirk," answered Robin.

And thus the conversation proceeded, until they had agreed on the prix juste for the bullocks, the squire throwing in the temporary accommodation of the inclosure for the cattle into the boot, and Robin making, as he thought, a very good bargain, provided the grass was but tolerable. The squire walked his pony alongside of the drove, partly to show him the way, and see him put into possession of the field, and partly to learn the latest news of the northern markets.

They arrived at the field, and the pasture seemed excellent. But what was their surprise when they saw the bailiff quietly inducting the cattle of Harry Wakefield into the grassy goshen which had just been assigned to those of Robin Oig

THE TWO DROVERS

M'Combich by the proprietor himself! Squire Ireby set spurs to his horse, dashed up to his servant, and learning what had passed between the parties, briefly informed the English drover that his bailiff had let the ground without his authority, and that he might seek grass for his cattle wherever he would, since he was to get none there. At the same time he rebuked his servant severely for having transgressed his commands, and ordered him instantly to assist in ejecting the hungry and weary cattle of Harry Wakefield, which were just beginning to enjoy a meal of unusual plenty, and to introduce those of his comrade, whom the English drover now began to consider as a rival.

The feelings which arose in Wakefield's mind would have induced him to resist Mr. Ireby's decision; but every Englishman has a tolerably accurate sense of law and justice, and John Fleecebumpkin, the bailiff, having acknowledged that he had exceeded his commission, Wakefield saw nothing else for it than to collect his hungry and disappointed charge, and drive them on to seek quarters elsewhere. Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, "Take it all, man—take it all; never make two bites of a cherry. Thou canst talk over the gentry, and blear a plain man's eye. Out upon you, man; I would not kiss any man's dirty latches for leave to bake in his oven."

Robin Oig, sorry but not surprised at his comrade's displeasure, hastened to entreat his friend to wait but an hour till he had gone to the squire's house to receive payment for the cattle he had sold, and he would come back and help him to drive the cattle into some convenient place of rest, and explain to him the whole mistake they had both of them fallen into.

But the Englishman continued indignant. "Thou hast been selling, hast thou? Ay—ay, thou is a cunning lad for kenning the hours of bargaining. Go to the devil with thyself, for I will ne'er see thy fause loon's visage again; thou should be ashamed to look me in the face."

"I am ashamed to look no man in the face," said Robin

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Oig, something moved; "and, moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will bide at the clachan down yonder."

"Mayhap you had as well keep away," said his comrade; and turning his back on his former friend, he collected his unwilling associates, assisted by the bailiff, who took some real and some affected interest in seeing Wakefield accommodated.

After spending some time in negotiating with more than one of the neighbouring farmers, who could not, or would not, afford the accommodation desired, Henry Wakefield at last, and in his necessity, accomplished his point by means of the landlord of the alehouse at which Robin Oig and he had agreed to pass the night, when they first separated from each other. Mine host was content to let him turn his cattle on a piece of barren moor, at a price little less than the bailiff had asked for the disputed inclosure; and the wretchedness of the pasture, as well as the price paid for it, were set down as exaggerations of the breach of faith and friendship of his Scottish crony. This turn of Wakefield's passions was encouraged by the bailiff, who had his own reasons for being offended against poor Robin, as having been the unwitting cause of his falling into disgrace with his master, as well as by the innkeeper, and two or three chance guests, who stimulated the drover in his resentment against his quondam associate—some from the ancient grudge against the Scots, which, when it exists anywhere, is to be found lurking in the Border counties, and some from the general love of mischief, which characterises mankind in all ranks of life, to the honour of Adam's children be it spoken. Good John Barleycorn also, who always heightens and exaggerates the prevailing passions, be they angry or kindly, was not wanting in his offices on this occasion; and confusion to false friends and hard masters was pledged in more than one tankard.

In the mean while, Mr. Ireby found some amusement in detaining the northern drover at his ancient hall. He caused a cold round of beef to be placed before the Scot in the butler's pantry, together with a foaming tankard of home-brewed, and took pleasure in seeing the hearty appetite with

THE TWO DROVERS

which these unwonted edibles were discussed by Robin Oig M'Combich. The squire himself, lighting his pipe, compounded between his patrician dignity and his love of agricultural gossip, by walking up and down while he conversed with his guest.

"I passed another drove," said the squire, "with one of your countrymen behind them; they were something less beasts than your drove, doddies most of them; a big man was with them—none of your kilts though, but a decent pair of breeches. D'ye know who he may be?"

"Hout aye, that might, could, and would be Hughie Morrison; I didna think he could hae been sac weel up. He has made a day on us; but his Argyleshires will have wearied shanks. How far was he behind?"

"I think about six or seven miles," answered the squire, "for I passed them at the Christenbury Crag, and I overtook you at the Hollan Bush. If his beasts be leg-weary, he will be maybe selling bargains."

"Na—na, Hughie Morrison is no the man for pargains; ye maun coome to some Highland body like Robin Oig herself for the like of these. Put I maun be wishing you goot-night, and twenty of them let alane ane, and I maun down to the clachan to see if the lad Harry Waakfelt is out of his humdudgeons yet."

The party at the alehouse were still in full talk, and the treachery of Robin Oig still the theme of conversation, when the supposed culprit entered the apartment. His arrival, as usually happens in such a case, put an instant stop to the discussion of which he had furnished the subject, and he was received by the company assembled with that chilling silence which, more than a thousand exclamations, tells an intruder that he is unwelcome. Surprised and offended, but not appalled, by the reception which he experienced, Robin entered with an undaunted and even a haughty air, attempted no greeting, as he saw he was received with none, and placed himself by the side of the fire, a little apart from a table at which Harry Wakefield, the bailiff, and two or three other persons were seated. The ample Cumbrian kitchen would have afforded plenty of room, even for a larger separation.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Robin, thus seated, proceeded to light his pipe and call for a pint of twopenny.

"We have no twopence ale," answered Ralph Heskett, the landlord; "but, as thou find'st thy own tobacco, it's like thou mayst find thy own liquor too; it's the wont of thy country, I wot."

"Shame, goodman," said the landlady, a blythe, bustling housewife, hastening herself to supply the guest with liquor. "Thou knowest well enow what the strange man wants, and it's thy trade to be civil, man. Thou shouldst know, that if the Scot likes a small pot, he pays a sure penny."

Without taking any notice of this nuptial dialogue, the Highlander took the flagon in his hand, and addressing the company generally, drank the interesting toast of "Good markets," to the party assembled.

"The better that the wind blew fewer dealers from the north," said one of the farmers, "and fewer Highland runts to eat up the English meadows."

"Saul of my pody, put you are wrang there, my friend," answered Robin, with composure; "it is your fat Englishmen that eat up our Scots cattle, puir things."

"I wish there was a summat to eat up their drovers," said another; "a plain Englishman canna make bread with a kenning of them."

"Or an honest servant keep his master's favour, but they will come sliding in between him and the sunshine," said the bailiff.

"If these pe jokes," said Robin Oig, with the same composure, "there is ower mony jokes upon one man."

"It is no joke, but downright earnest," said the bailiff. "Harkye, Mr. Robin Ogg, or whatever is your name, it's right we should tell you that we are all of one opinion, and that is, that you, Mr. Robin Ogg, have behaved to our friend, Mr. Harry Wakefield here, like a raff and a blackguard."

"Nae doubt—nae doubt," answered Robin, with great composure; "and you are a set of very pretty judges, for whose prains or pehaviour I wad not gie a pinch of sneeshing. If Mr. Harry Waakfelt kens where he is wranged, he kens where he may be righted."

"He speaks truth," said Wakefield, who had listened to

THE TWO DROVERS

what passed, divided between the offence which he had taken at Robin's late behaviour and the revival of his habitual feelings of regard.

He now rose and went towards Robin, who got up from his seat as he approached, and held out his hand.

"That's right, Harry—go it—serve him out," resounded on all sides—"tip him the nailer—show him the mill."

"Hold your peace all of you, and be—," said Wakefield; and then addressing his comrade, he took him by the extended hand, with something alike of respect and defiance. "Robin," he said, "thou hast used me ill enough this day; but if you mean, like a frank fellow, to shake hands, and take a tussle for love on the sod, why, I'll forgive thee, man, and we shall be better friends than ever."

"And would it no pe petter to pe cood friends without more of the matter?" said Robin; "we will be much petter friendships with our panes hale than proken."

Harry Wakefield dropped the hand of his friend, or rather threw it from him.

"I did not think I had been keeping company for three years with a coward."

"Coward pelongs to none of my name," said Robin, whose eyes began to kindle, but keeping the command of his temper. "It was no coward's legs or hands, Harry Waakfelt, that drew you out of the fords of Frew, when you was drifting ower the plack rock, and every eel in the river expected his share of you."

"And that is true enough, too," said the Englishman, struck by the appeal.

"Adzooks!" exclaimed the bailiff; "sure Harry Wakefield, the nattiest lad at Whitson Tryste, Wooler Fair, Carlisle Sands, or Stagshaw Bank, is not going to show white feather? Ah, this comes of living so long with kilts and bonnets; men forget the use of their daddles."

"I may teach you, Master Fleecebumpkin, that I have not lost the use of mine," said Wakefield, and then went on: "This will never do, Robin. We must have a turn-up, or we shall be the talk of the countryside. I'll be d—d if I hurt thee. I'll put on the gloves gin thou like. Come, stand forward like a man."

SIR WALTER SCOTT

"To be peaten like a dog," said Robin; "is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I'll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language."

A general cry of "No, no—no law, no lawyer! A bellyful and be friends!" was echoed by the bystanders.

"But," continued Robin, "if I am to fight, I have no skill to fight like a jackanapes, with hands and nails."

"How would you fight, then?" said his antagonist; "though I am thinking it would be hard to bring you to the scratch anyhow."

"I would fight with broadswords, and sink point on the first blood drawn, like a gentleman."

A loud shout of laughter followed the proposal, which indeed had rather escaped from poor Robin's swelling heart than been the dictate of his sober judgment.

"Gentleman, quotha!" was echoed on all sides, with a shout of unextinguishable laughter; "a very pretty gentleman, God wot. Canst get two swords for the gentleman to fight with, Ralph Heskett?"

"No, but I can send to the armoury at Carlisle, and lend them two forks, to be making shift with in the mean time."

"Tush, man," said another, "the bonny Scots come into the world with the blue bonnet on their heads, and dirk and pistol at their belt."

"Best send post," said Mr. Fleecetumpkin, "to the squire of Corby Castle, to come and stand second to the gentleman."

In the midst of this torrent of general ridicule, the Highlander instinctively griped beneath the folds of his plaid.

"But it's better not," he said in his own language. "A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility!"

"Make room, the pack of you," he said, advancing to the door.

But his former friend interposed his sturdy bulk, and opposed his leaving the house; and when Robin Oig attempted to make his way by force, he hit him down on the floor, with as much ease as a boy bowls down a ninepin.

"A ring—a ring!" was now shouted, until the dark rafters,

THE TWO DROVERS

and the hams that hung on them, trembled again, and the very platters on the "bink" clattered against each other. "Well done, Harry"—"Give it him home, Harry"—"Take care of him now, he sees his own blood!"

Such were the exclamations, while the Highlander, starting from the ground, all his coldness and caution lost in frantic rage, sprung at his antagonist with the fury, the activity, and the vindictive purpose of an incensed tiger-cat. But when could rage encounter science and temper? Robin Oig again went down in the unequal contest; and as the blow was necessarily a severe one, he lay motionless on the floor of the kitchen.

The landlady ran to offer some aid; but Mr. Fleecebumpkin would not permit her to approach. "Let him alone," he said, "he will come to within time, and come up to the scratch again. He has not got half his broth yet."

"He has got all I mean to give him, though," said his antagonist, whose heart began to relent towards his old associate; "and I would rather by half give the rest to yourself, Mr. Fleecebumpkin, for you pretend to know a thing or two, and Robin had not art enough even to peel before setting to, but fought with his plaid dangling about him. Stand up, Robin, my man, all friends now, and let me hear the man that will speak a word against you, or your country, for your sake."

Robin Oig was still under the dominion of his passion, and eager to renew the onset; but being withheld on the one side by the peacemaking Dame Heskett, and on the other aware that Wakefield no longer meant to renew the combat, his fury sunk into gloomy sullenness.

"Come—come, never grudge so much at it, man," said the brave-spirited Englishman, with the placability of his country; "shake hands, and we will be better friends than ever."

"Friends!" exclaimed Robin Oig with strong emphasis—"friends! Never. Look to yourself, Harry Waakfelt."

"Then the curse of Cromwell on your proud Scots stomach, as the man says in the play, and you may do your worst, and be d—d; for one man can say nothing more to another after a tussle, than that he is sorry for it."

SIR WALTER SCOTT

On these terms the friends parted. Robin Oig drew out, in silence, a piece of money, threw it on the table, and then left the alehouse. But, turning at the door, he shook his hand at Wakefield, pointing with his forefinger upwards, in a manner which might imply either a threat or a caution. He then disappeared in the moonlight.

Some words passed after his departure between the bailiff, who piqued himself on being a little of a bully, and Harry Wakefield, who, with generous inconsistency, was now not indisposed to begin a new combat in defence of Robin Oig's reputation, "although he could not use his daddles like an Englishman, as it did not come natural to him."

But Dame Heskett prevented this second quarrel from coming to a head by her peremptory interference. "There should be no more fighting in her house," she said; "there had been too much already. And you, Mr. Wakefield, may live to learn," she added, "what it is to make a deadly enemy out of a good friend."

"Pshaw, dame! Robin Oig is an honest fellow, and will never keep malice."

Do not trust to that: you do not know the dour temper of the Scots, though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot."

"And so is well seen on her daughter," said Ralph Heskett.

This nuptial sarcasm gave the discourse another turn; fresh customers entered the taproom or kitchen, and others left it. The conversation turned on the expected markets, and the reports of prices from different parts both of Scotland and England; treaties were commenced, and Harry Wakefield was lucky enough to find a chap for a part of his drove, and at a very considerable profit—an event of consequence more than sufficient to blot out all remembrances of the unpleasant scuffle in the earlier part of the day.

But there remained one party from whose mind that recollection could not have been wiped away by the possession of every head of cattle betwixt Esk and Eden. This was Robin Oig M'Combich. "That I should have had no weapon," he said, "and for the first time in my life! Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk.

THE TWO DROVERS

The dirk hae! the English blood! My muhime's word—when did her word fall to the ground?"

The recollection of the fatal prophecy confirmed the deadly intention which instantly sprang up in his mind.

"Ha! Morrison cannot be many miles behind; and if it were an hundred, what then?"

His impetuous spirit had now a fixed purpose and motive of action, and he turned the light foot of his country towards the wilds, through which he knew, by Mr. Ireby's report, that Morrison was advancing. His mind was wholly engrossed by the sense of injury—injury sustained from a friend, and by the desire of vengeance on one whom he now accounted his most bitter enemy. The treasured ideas of self-importance and self-opinion—of ideal birth and quality, had become more precious to him, like the hoard to the miser, because he could only enjoy them in secret. But that hoard was pillaged; the idols which he had secretly worshipped had been desecrated and profane. Insulted, abused, and beaten, he was no longer worthy, in his own opinion, of the name he bore, or the lineage which he belonged to; nothing was left to him—nothing but revenge; and, as the reflection added a galling spur to every step, he determined it should be as sudden and signal as the offence.

When Robin Oig left the door of the alehouse, seven or eight English miles at least lay betwixt Morrison and him. The advance of the former was slow, limited by the sluggish pace of his cattle; the last left behind him stubble-field and hedgerow, crag and dark heath, all glittering with frost-rime in the broad November moonlight, at the rate of six miles an hour. And now the distant lowing of Morrison's cattle is heard; and now they are seen creeping like moles in size and slowness of motion on the broad face of the moor; and now he meets them, passes them, and stops their conductor.

"May good betide us," said the Southlander. "Is this you, Robin M'Combich, or your wraith?"

It is Robin Oig M'Combich," answered the Highlander, "and it is not. But never mind that, put pe giving me the skene-dhu."

"What! you are for back to the Highlands. The devil!

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Have you selt all off before the fair? This beats all for quick markets."

"I have not sold—I am not going north. May pe I will never go north again. Give me pack my dirk, Hugh Morrison, or there will pe words between us."

"Indeed, Robin, I'll be better advised before I gie it back to you; it is a wanchancy weapon in a Highlandman's hand, and I am thinking you will be about some barns-breaking."

"Prudd, trudd! let me have my weapon," said Robin Oig, impatiently.

"Hooly and fairly," said his well-meaning friend. "I'll tell you what will do better than these dirking doings. Ye ken Highlander, and Lowlander, and Bordermen are a' ae man's balrns when you are over the Scots dyke. See, the Eskdale callants, and fighting Charlie of Liddesdale, and the Lockerby lads, and the four Dandies of Lustruther, and a ween mair grey plaids are coming up behind; and if you are wranged, there is the hand of a Manly Morrison, we'll see you righted, if Carlisle and Stanwix baith took up the feud."

"To tell you the truth," said Robin Oig, desirous of eluding the suspicions of his friend, "I have enlisted with a party of the Black Watch, and must march off to-morrow morning."

"Enlisted! Were you mad or drunk? You must buy yourself off. I can lend you twenty notes, and twenty to that, if the drove sell."

"I thank you—thank ye, Hughie; but I go with good-will the gate that I am going; so the dirk—the dirk!"

"There it is for you then, since less wunna serve. But think on what I was saying. Waes me, it will be sair news in the braes of Balquidder, that Robin Oig M'Combich should have run an ill gate, and ta'en on."

"Ill news in Balquidder, indeed!" echoed poor Robin; "but Cot speed you, Hughie, and send you good marcats. Ye winna meet with Robin Oig again, either at tryste or fair."

So saying, he shook hastily the hand of his acquaintance, and set out in the direction from which he had advanced, with the spirit of his former pace.

"There is something wrang with the lad," muttered the

THE TWO DROVERS

Morrison to himself; "but we will maybe see better into it the morn's morning."

But long ere the morning dawned, the catastrophe of our tale had taken place. It was two hours after the affray had happened, and it was totally forgotten by almost every one, when Robin Oig returned to Heskett's inn. The place was filled at once by various sorts of men and with noises corresponding to their character. There were the grave low sounds of men engaged in busy traffic, with the laugh, the song, and the riotous jest of those who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. Among the last was Harry Wakefield, who, amidst a grinning group of smock-frocks, hobnailed shoes, and jolly English physiognomies, was trolling forth the old ditty,

"What though my name be Roger,
Who drives the plough and cart—"

when he was interrupted by a well-known voice saying in a high and stern voice, marked by the sharp Highland accent, "Harry Waakfelt, if you be a man, stand up!"

"What is the matter?—what is it?" the guests demanded of each other.

"It is only a d—d Scotsman," said Fleecebumpkin, who was by this time very drunk, "whom Harry Wakefield helped to his broth to-day, who is now come to have his cauld kail het again."

"Harry Waakfelt," repeated the same ominous summons, "stand up, if you be a man!"

There is something in the tone of deep and concentrated passion which attracts attention and imposes awe, even by the very sound. The guests shrunk back on every side, and gazed at the Highlander as he stood in the middle of them, his brows bent, and his features rigid with resolution.

"I will stand up with all my heart, Robin, my boy, but it shall be to shake hands with you, and drink down all unkindness. It is not the fault of your heart, man, that you don't know how to clench your hands."

By this time he stood opposite to his antagonist; his open and unsuspecting look strangely contrasted with the stern purpose which gleamed wild, dark, and vindictive in the eyes of the Highlander.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

"'Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl."

"I can fight," answered Robin Oig, sternly but calmly, "and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me to-day how the Saxon churls fight; I show you now how the Highland duiniè-wassel fights."

He seconded the word with the action, and plunged the dagger, which he suddenly displayed, into the broad breast of the English yoeman, with such fatal certainty and force that the hilt made a hollow sound against the breast-bone, and the double-edged point split the very heart of his victim. Harry Wakefield fell and expired with a single groan. His assassin next seized the bailiff by the collar, and offered the bloody poniard to his throat, whilst dread and surprise rendered the man incapable of defence.

"It were very just to lay you beside him," he said, "but the blood of a base pickthank shall never mix on my father's dirk with that of a brave man."

As he spoke, he cast the man from him with so much force that he fell on the floor, while Robin, with his other hand, threw the fatal weapon into the blazing turf-fire.

"There," he said, "take me who likes, and let fire cleanse blood if it can."

The cause of astonishment still continuing, Robin Oig asked for a peace-officer, and a constable having stepped out, he surrendered himself to his custody.

"A bloody night's work you have made of it," said the constable.

"Your own fault," said the Highlander. "Had you kept his hands off me twa hours since, he would have been now as well and merry as he was twa minutes since."

"It must be sorely answered," said the peace-officer.

"Never you mind that. Death pays all debts; it will pay that too."

The horror of the bystanders began now to give way to indignation; and the sight of a favourite companion murdered in the midst of them, the provocation being, in their opinion, so utterly inadequate to the excess of vengeance, might have induced them to kill the perpetrator of the deed

THE TWO DROVERS

even upon the very spot. The constable, however, did his duty on this occasion, and, with the assistance of some of the more reasonable persons present, procured horses to guard the prisoner to Carlisle, to abide his doom at the next assizes. While the escort was preparing, the prisoner neither expressed the least interest nor attempted the slightest reply. Only, before he was carried from the fatal apartment, he desired to look at the dead body, which, raised from the floor, had been deposited upon the large table (at the head of which Harry Wakefield had presided but a few minutes before, full of life, vigour, and animation), until the surgeons should examine the mortal wound. The face of the corpse was decently covered with a napkin. To the surprise and horror of the bystanders, which displayed itself in a general "Ah!" drawn through clenched teeth and half-shut lips, Robin Oig removed the cloth, and gazed with a mournful but steady eye on the lifeless visage, which had been so lately animated, that the smile of good-humoured confidence in his own strength, of conciliation at once and contempt towards his enemy, still curled his lip. While those present expected that the wound, which had so lately flooded the apartment with gore, would send forth fresh streams at the touch of the homicide, Robin Oig replaced the covering with the brief exclamation, "He was a pretty man!"

My story is nearly ended. The unfortunate Highlander stood his trial at Carlisle. I was myself present, and as a young Scottish lawyer, or barrister at least, and reputed a man of some quality, the politeness of the sheriff of Cumberland offered me a place on the bench. The facts of the case were proved in the manner I have related them; and whatever might be at first the prejudice of the audience against a crime so un-English as that of assassination from revenge, yet when the rooted national prejudices of the prisoner had been explained, which made him consider himself as stained with indelible dishonour when subjected to personal violence, when his previous patience, moderation, and endurance were considered, the generosity of the English audience was inclined to regard his crime as the wayward aberration of a false idea of honour rather than as flowing from a heart

SIR WALTER SCOTT

naturally savage, or perverted by habitual vice. I shall never forget the charge of the venerable judge to the jury, although not at that time liable to be much affected either by that which was eloquent or pathetic.

"We have had," he said, "in the previous part of our duty (alluding to some former trials), to discuss crimes which infer disgust and abhorrence, while they call down the well-merited vengeance of the law. It is now our still more melancholy task to apply its salutary though severe enactments to a case of a very singular character, in which the crime, for a crime it is, and a deep one, arose less out of the malevolence of the heart than the error of the understanding—less from any idea of committing wrong than from an unhappily perverted notion of that which is right. Here we have two men, highly esteemed, it has been stated, in their rank of life, and attached, it seems, to each other as friends, one of whose lives has been already sacrificed to a punctilio, and the other is about to prove the vengeance of the offended law; and yet both may claim our commiseration at least, as men acting in ignorance of each other's national prejudices, and unhappily misguided rather than voluntarily erring from the path of right conduct.

"In the original cause of the misunderstanding, we must in justice give the right to the prisoner at the bar. He had acquired possession of the inclosure, which was the object of competition, by a legal contract with the proprietor, Mr. Ireby; and yet, when accosted with reproaches undeserved in themselves, and galling doubtless to a temper at least sufficiently susceptible of passion, he offered notwithstanding to yield up half his acquisition, for the sake of peace and good neighbourhood, and his amicable proposal was rejected with scorn. Then follows the scene at Mr. Heskett the publican's, and you will observe how the stranger was treated by the deceased, and, I am sorry to observe, by those around, who seem to have urged him in a manner which was aggravating in the highest degree. While he asked for peace and for composition, and offered submission to a magistrate, or to a mutual arbiter, the prisoner was insulted by a whole company, who seem on this occasion to have forgotten the national maxim of 'fair play'; and while attempting to escape

THE TWO DROVERS

from the place in peace, he was intercepted, struck down, and beaten to the effusion of his blood.

"Gentlemen of the jury, it was with some impatience that I heard my learned brother, who opened the case for the crown, give an unfavourable turn to the prisoner's conduct on this occasion. He said the prisoner was afraid to encounter his antagonist in fair fight, or to submit to the laws of the ring; and that, therefore, like a cowardly Italian, he had recourse to his fatal stiletto, to murder the man whom he dared not meet in manly encounter. I observed the prisoner shrink from this part of the accusation with the abhorrence natural to a brave man; and as I would wish to make my words impressive when I point his real crime, I must secure his opinion of my impartiality by rebutting everything that seems to me a false accusation. There can be no doubt that the prisoner is a man of resolution—too much resolution. I wish to Heaven that he had less, or rather that he had had a better education to regulate it.

"Gentlemen, as to the laws my brother talks of, they may be known in the bull-ring, or the bear-garden, or the cockpit, but they are not known here. Or, if they should be so far admitted as furnishing a species of proof that no malice was intended in this sort of combat, from which fatal accidents do sometimes arise, it can only be so admitted when both parties are in *pari casu*, equally acquainted with, and equally willing to refer themselves to, that species of arbitrament. But will it be contended that a man of superior rank and education is to be subjected, or is obliged to subject himself, to this coarse and brutal strife, perhaps in opposition to a younger, stronger, or more skilful opponent? Certainly even the pugilistic code, if founded upon the fair play of Merry Old England, as my brother alleges it to be, can contain nothing so preposterous. And, gentlemen of the jury, if the laws would support an English gentleman, wearing, we will suppose, his sword, in defending himself by force against a violent personal aggression of the nature offered to this prisoner, they will not less protect a foreigner and a stranger, involved in the same unpleasant circumstances. If, therefore, gentlemen of the jury, when thus pressed by a *vis major*, the object of obloquy to a whole company, and of direct violence

SIR WALTER SCOTT

from one at least, and, as he might reasonably apprehend, from more, the panel had produced the weapon which his countrymen, as we are informed, generally carry about their persons, and the same unhappy circumstance had ensued which you have heard detailed in evidence, I could not in my conscience have asked from you a verdict of murder. The prisoner's personal defence might indeed, even in that case, have gone more or less beyond the moderamen inculpatæ tutelæ spoken of by lawyers, but the punishment incurred would have been that of manslaughter, not of murder. I beg leave to add, that I should have thought this milder species of charge was demanded in the case supposed, notwithstanding the statute of James I. cap. 8, which takes the case of slaughter by stabbing with a short weapon, even without malice prepense, out of the benefit of clergy. For this statute of stabbing, as it is termed, arose out of a temporary cause; and as the real guilt is the same, whether the slaughter be committed by the dagger or by sword or pistol, the benignity of the modern law places them all on the same, or nearly the same, footing.

"But, gentlemen of the jury, the pinch of the case lies in the interval of two hours interposed betwixt the reception of the injury and the fatal retaliation. In the heat of affray and chaude mêlée, law, compassionating the infirmities of humanity, makes allowance for the passions which rule such a stormy moment—for the sense of present pain, for the apprehension of further injury, for the difficulty of ascertaining with due accuracy the precise degree of violence which is necessary to protect the person of the individual, without annoying or injuring the assailant more than is absolutely necessary. But the time necessary to walk twelve miles, however speedily performed, was an interval sufficient for the prisoner to have recollected himself; and the violence with which he carried his purpose into effect, with so many circumstances of deliberate determination, could neither be induced by the passion of anger nor that of fear. It was the purpose and the act of predetermined revenge, for which law neither can, will, nor ought to have sympathy or allowance.

"It is true, we may repeat to ourselves, in alleviation of this poor man's unhappy action, that his case is a very pe-

THE TWO DROVERS

culiar one. The country which he inhabits was, in the days of many now alive, inaccessible to the laws not only of England, which have not even yet penetrated thither, but to those to which our neighbours of Scotland are subjected, and which must be supposed to be, and no doubt actually are, founded upon the general principles of justice and equity which pervade every civilised country. Amongst their mountains, as among the North American Indians, the various tribes were wont to make war upon each other, so that each man was obliged to go armed for his own protection. These men, from the ideas which they entertained of their own descent and of their own consequence, regarded themselves as so many cavaliers or men-at-arms, rather than as the peasantry of a peaceful country. Those laws of the ring, as my brother terms them, were unknown to the race of warlike mountaineers; that decision of quarrels by no other weapons than those which nature has given every man must to them have seemed as vulgar and as preposterous as to the noblesse of France. Revenge, on the other hand, must have been as familiar to their habits of society as to those of the Cherokees or Mohawks. It is indeed, as described by Bacon, at bottom a kind of wild untutored justice; for the fear of retaliation must withhold the hands of the oppressor where there is no regular law to check daring violence. But though all this may be granted, and though we may allow that, such having been the case of the Highlands in the days of the prisoner's fathers, many of the opinions and sentiments must still continue to influence the present generation, it cannot, and ought not, even in this most painful case, to alter the administration of the law, either in your hands, gentlemen of the jury, or in mine. The first object of civilisation is to place the general protection of the law, equally administered, in the room of that wild justice which every man cut and carved for himself, according to the length of his sword and the strength of his arm. The law says to the subjects, with a voice only inferior to that of the Deity, 'vengeance is mine.' The instant that there is time for passion to cool and reason to interpose, an injured party must become aware that the law assumes the exclusive cognizance of the right and wrong betwixt the parties, and opposes her

THE TWO DROVERS

invulnerable buckler to every attempt of the private party to right himself. I repeat, that this unhappy man ought personally to be the object rather of our pity than our abhorrence, for he failed in his ignorance and from mistaken notions of honour. But his crime is not the less that of murder, gentlemen, and, in your high and important office, it is your duty so to find. Englishmen have their angry passions as well as Scots; and should this man's action remain unpunished, you may unsheath, under various pretences, a thousand daggers betwixt the Land's End and the Orkneys."


The venerable judge thus ended what, to judge by his apparent emotion, and by the tears which filled his eyes, was really a painful task. The jury, according to his instructions, brought in a verdict of Guilty; and Robin Oig M'Combich, alias M'Gregor, was sentenced to death, and left for execution, which took place accordingly. He met his fate with great firmness, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. "I give a life for the life I took," he said, "and what can I do more?"¹

¹ See Robert Donn's Poems. Note 14.

MR. DEUCEACE
DIMOND CUT DIMOND
BY W. M. THACKERAY

MR. DEUCEACE
DIMOND CUT DIMOND

By W. M. THACKERAY

HE name of my next master was, if possibl, still more ellygant and youfonious than that of my fust. I now found myself boddy servant to the Honrabble Halgernon Percy Deuceace, youngest and fith son of the Earl of Crabs.

Halgernon was a barrystir—that is, he lived in Pump Court, Temple; a vulgar naybrood, witch praps my readers don't no. Suffiz to say, it's on the confines of the citty, and the choasen aboad of the lawyers of this metrappolish.

When I say that Mr. Deuceace was a barrystir, I don't mean that he went sesshums or surcoats (as they call 'em), but simply that he kep chambers, lived in Pump Court, and looked out for a commitionarship, or a revisinship, or any other place that the Wig guvvyment could give him. His father was a Wig pier (as the landriss told me), and had been a Toary pier. The fack is, his lordship was so poar, that he would be anythink, or nothink, to get previsions for his sons, and an inkum for him self.

I phansy that he aloud Halgernon two hunderd a year; and it would have been a very comfortable maintenants, only he knever paid him.

Owever, the young gnlmn was a gnlmn, and no mistake: he got his allowents of nothink a year, and spent it in the most honrabble and fashnabble manner. He kep a kab—he went to Holmax—and Crockfud's—he moved in the most xquizzit suckles—and trubbl'd the law boox very little, I can tell you. Those fashnabble gents have ways of getten money, witch comman pipples doant understand.

Though he only had a therd floar in Pump Cort, he lived as if he had the welth if Cresas. The tenpun notes floo abowt as common as haypince—clarrit and shampang was

W. M. THACKERAY

at his house as vulgar as gin; and verry glad I was, to be sure, to be a valley to a zion of the nobillaty.

Deuceace had, in his sittin-room, a large pictur on a sheet of paper. The names of his family was wrote on it: it was wrote in the shape of a tree, a groin out of a man-in-armers stomick, and the names were on little plates among the bows. The pictur said that the Deuceaces kem into England in the year 1066, along with William Conqueruna. My master called it his podygree. I do bleev it was because he had this pictur, and because he was the Honrabbble Deuceace, that he mannichted to live as he did. If he had been a common man, you'd have said he was no better than a swinler. It's only rank and buth that can warrant such singularities as my master show'd. For it's no use disgyysing it—the Honrabbble Halgernon was a Gambler. For a man of vulgar family, it's the wust trade that can be—for a man of common feelinx of honesty, this profession is quite imposbill; but for a real tough-bread genlmn, it's the easiest and most prophet-able line he can take.

It may, praps, appear curous that such a fashnable man should live in the Temple; but it must be recklected, that its not only lawyers who live in what's called the Ins of Cort. Many batchylers who have nothink to do with lor, have here their loginx; and many sham barrysters, who never put on a wig and gowned twice in their lives, kip apartments in the Temple, instead of Bon Street, Pickledilly, or other fash-nabble places.

Frinstance, on our stairkis (so these houses are called), there was 8 sets of chambersea, and only 3 lawyers. These was, bottom floar, Screwson, Hewson, and Jewson, attorneys; fust floor, Mr. Sergeant Flabber—opsite, Mr. Counslor Bruffy; and secknd pair, Mr. Haggerstony, an Irish counslor, practising at the Old Baly, and lickwise what they call reporter to the Morning Post nyouspapper. Opsite him was wrote

MR. RICHARD BLEWITT;

and on the thud floar, with my master, lived one Mr. Dawkins.

This young fellow was a new comer into the Temple, and

MR. DEUCEACE

unlucky it was for him too—he'd better have never been born; for its my firm apinion that the Temple ruined him—that is, with the help of my master and Mr. Dick Blewitt, as you shall hear.

Mr. Dawkins, as I was gave to understand by his young man, had jest left the Universary of Oxford, and had a pretty little fortin of his own—six thousand pound, or so—in the stox. He was jest of age, an orfin who had lost his father and mother; and having distinkwished hisself at collitch, where he gained seffral prices, was come to town to push his fortin, and study the barryster's bianss.

Not bein of a verry high fammly hisself—indeed, I've heard say his father was a chismonger, or somethink of that lo sort—Dawkins was glad to find his old Oxford friend, Mr. Blewitt, yonger son to rich Squire Blewitt, of Listershire, and to take rooms so near him.

Now, tho' there was a considrable intimacy between me and Mr. Blewitt's gentleman, there was scarcely any betwixt our masters,—mine being too much of the aristoxty to associate with one of Mr. Blewitt's sort. Blewitt was what they call a bettin man: he went reglar to Tattlesall's, kep a pony, wore a white hat, a blue berd's-eye handkercher, and a cut-away coat. In his manners he was the very contrary of my master, who was a slim, ellygant man, as ever I see—he had very white hands, rayther a sallow face, with sharp dark ise, and small wiskus neatly trimmed, and as black as Warren's jet—he spoke very low and soft—he seemed to be watchin the person with whom he was in convysation, and always flattered every body. As for Blewitt, he was quite of another sort. He was always swearin, singin, and slappin people on the back, as hearty and as familiar as possbill. He seemed a merry, careless, honest cretur, whom one would trust with life and soul. So thought Dawkins, at least; who, though a quiet young man, fond of his boox, novvles, Byron's poems, ffoot-playing, and such like scientafic amusemints, grew hand in glove with honest Dick Blewitt, and soon after with my master, the Honrabble Halgernon. Poor Daw! he thought he was makin good connexions, and real friends—he had fallen in with a couple of the most etrocious swinlers that ever lived.

W. M. THACKERAY

Before Mr. Dawkins's arrival in our house, Mr. Deuceace had barely condysended to speak to Mr. Blewitt: it was only about a month after that suckumstance that my master, all of a sudding, grew very friendly with him. The reason was pretty clear,—Deuceace wanted him. Dawkins had not been an hour in master's compny before he knew that he had a pidgin to pluck.

Blewitt knew this too; and bein very fond of pidgin, intended to keep this one entirely to himself. It was amusin to see the Honrabble Halgernon manuvring to get this pore bird out of Blewitt's clause, who thought he had it safe. In fact, he'd brought Dawkins to these chambers for that very porpos, thinking to have him under his eye, and strip him at leisure.

My master very soon found out what was Mr. Blewitt's game. Gamblers know gamblers, if not by instink, at least by reputation; and though Mr. Blewitt moved in a much lower spear than Mr. Deuceace, they knew each other's dealins and caracters puffickly well.

"Charles, you scoundrel," says Deuceace to me one day (he always spoak in that kind way), "who is this person that has taken the opsit chambers, and plays the flute so industrusly?"

"It's Mr. Dawkins, a rich young gentleman from Oxford, and a great friend of Mr. Blewittses, sir," says I; "they seem to live in each other's rooms."

Master said nothink, but he grin'd—my eye, how he did grin! Not the fowl find himself could snear more satan-nickly.

I knew what he meant:

Imprimish. A man who plays the flook is a simpleton.

Secknly. Mr. Blewitt is a raskle.

Thirdmo. When a raskle and a simpleton is always together, and when the simpleton is rich, one knows pretty well what will come of it.

I was but a lad in them days, but I knew what was what as well as my master; it's not gentlemen only that's up to snough. Law bless us! there was four of us on this stairkes, four as nice young men as you ever see; Mr. Bruffy's young man, Mr. Dawkinses, Mr. Blewitt's, and me—and we knew

MR. DEUCEACE.

what our masters was about as well as they did theirselves. Frinstance, I can say this for myself, there wasn't a paper in Deuceace's desk or drawer, not a bill, a note, or mimerandum, which I hadn't read as well as he: with Blewitt's it was the same—me and his young man used to read 'em all. There wasn't a bottle of wine that we didn't get a glas, nor a pound of sugar that we didn't have some lumps of it. We had keys to all the cubbards—we pipped into all the letters that kem and went—we pored over all the bill-files—we'd the best pickens out of the dinners, the livvers of the fowls, the force-mit balls out of the soup, the eggs from the sallit. As for the coals and candles, we left them to the landrisses. You may call this robry—nonsince—it's only our right—a suvvant's purquizzits is as sacred as the laws of Hengland.

Well, the long and short of it is this. Richard Blewitt, esquire, was sityuated as follows: He'd an inkum of three hunderd a year from his father. Out of this he had to pay one hunderd and ninety for money borrowed by him at colldige, seventy for chambers, seventy more for his hoss, aty for his suvvant on bord wagis, and about three hunderd and fifty for a supprat establishmint in the Regency Park; besides this, his pockit money, say a hunderd, his eatin, drinkin, and wine-marchant's bill, about two hunderd moar. So that you see he laid by a pretty handsome sum at the end of the year.

My master was diffrent: and being a more fashnable man than Mr. B., in course he owed a deal more money. There was fust:—

Account contray, at Crockford's	£3711	0	0
Bills of xchange and I.O.U.'s (but he didn't pay these in most cases)	4963	0	0
21 tailor's bills, in all	1306	11	9
3 hossdealer's do.	402	0	0
2 coachbuilder	506	0	0
Bills contractd at Cambritch	2193	6	8
Sundries	987	10	0
	<hr/>		
	£14,069	8	5

W. M. THACKERAY

I give this as a curiosity—pipple doant know how in many cases fashnabble life is carried on; and to know even what a real gnlmn owes is somethink instructif and agreeable.

But to my tail. The very day after my master had made the inquiries concerning Mr. Dawkins, witch I have mentioned already, he met Mr. Blewitt on the stairs; and byoutiffle it was to see how this gnlman, who had before been almost cut by my master, was now received by him. One of the sweatest smiles I ever saw was now vizzable on Mr. Deuceace's countenance. He held out his hand, covered with a white kid glove, and said, in the most frenly tone of vice posbill, "What? Mr. Blewitt! It is an age since we met. What a shame that such near naybors should see each other so seldom!"

Mr. Blewitt, who was standing at his door, in a pe-green dressing-gown, smoakin a segar, and singing a hunting coarus, looked surprised, flattered, and then suspicious.

"Why, yes," says he, "it is, Mr. Deuceace, a long time."

"Not, I think, since we dined at Sir George Hookeys. By the by, what an evening that was—hay, Mr. Blewitt? What wine! what capital songs! I recollect your 'May-day in the morning'—cuss me, the best comick song I ever heard. I was speaking to the Duke of Doncaster about it only yesterday. You know the duke, I think?"

Mr. Blewitt said, quite surly, "No, I don't."

"Not know him!" cries master; "why, hang it, Blewitt! he knows you; as every sporting man in England does, I should think. Why, man, your good things are in everybody's mouth at Newmarket."

And so master went on chaffin Mr. Blewitt. That genlman at fust answered him quite short and angry; but, after a little more flumery, he grew as pleased as posbill, took in all Deuceace's flatry, and bleeved all his lies. At last the door shut, and they both went into Mr. Blewitt's chambers together.

Of course I can't say what past there; but in an hour master kem up to his own room as yaller as mustard, and smellin sadly of backo smoke. I never see any genlman more sick than he was; he'd been smoakin seagars along with

MR. DEUCEACE

Blewitt. I said nothink, in course, tho' I'd often heard him xpress his horror of backo, and knew very well he would as soon swallow pizon as smoke. But he wasn't a chap to do a thing without a reason: if he'd been smoakin, I warrant he had smoked to some porpus.

I didn't hear the convysation between 'em; but Mr. Blewitt's man did: it was,—“Well, Mr. Blewitt, what capital seagars! Have you one for a friend to smoak?” (The old fox, it wasn't only the seagars he was a smoakin!) “Walk in,” says Mr. Blewitt; and then they began a chaffin together; master very anksmous about the young gintleman who had come to live in our chambers, Mr. Dawkins, and always coming back to that subject,—sayin that people on the same stairkis ot to be frenly; how glad he'd be, for his part, to know Mr. Dick Blewitt, and any friend of his, and so on. Mr. Dick, howsever, seamed quite aware of the trap laid for him. “I really don't know this Dawkins,” says he: “he's a chismonger's son, I hear; and tho I've exchanged visits with him, I doant intend to continyou the acquaintance,—not wishin to assoshate with that kind of pippel.” So they went on, master fishin, and Mr. Blewitt not wishin to take the hook at no price.

“Confound the vulgar thief!” muttard my master, as he was laying on his sophy, after being so very ill; “I've poisoned myself with his infernal tobacco, and he has foiled me. The cursed swindling boor! he thinks he'll ruin this poor cheesemonger, does he? I'll step in, and warn him.”

I thought I should bust a laffin, when he talked in this style. I knew very well what his “warning” meant,—lockin the stable-door, but stealin the hoss fust.

Next day, his strattygam for becoming acquainted with Mr. Dawkins he excicuted, and very pritty it was.

Besides potry and the flook, Mr. Dawkins, I must tell you, had some other parshallities—wiz., he was very fond of good eatin and drinkin. After doddling over his music and boox all day, this young genlmm used to sally out of evenings, dine sumptuously at a tavern, drinkin all sots of wine along with his friend Mr. Blewitt. He was a quiet young fellow enough at fust; but it was Mr. B. who (for his own porpuses, no doubt) had got him into this kind of

W. M. THACKERAY

life. Well, I needn't say that he who eats a fine dinner, and drinks too much overnight, wants a bottle of soda-water, and a grill, praps, in the mornink. Such was Mr. Dawkinses case; and reglar almost as twelve o'clock came, the waiter from Dix Coffy-House was to be seen on our stairkis, bringin up Mr. D.'s hot breakfast.

No man would have thought there was anythink in such a trifling circkumstance; master did, though, and pounced upon it like a cock on a barleycorn.

He sent me out to Mr. Morell's, in Pickledilly, for wot's called a Strasbug-pie—in French, a "patty defaw graw." He takes a card, and nails it on the outside case (patty defaw graws come generally in a round wooden box, like a drumb); and what do you think he writes on it? why, as follos:—"For the Honourable Algernon Percy Deuceace, etc. etc. etc. With Prince Talleyrand's compliments."

Prince Tallyram's compliments, indeed! I laff when I think of it still, the old surpint! He was a surpint, that Deuceace, and no mistake.

Well, by a most extrornary piece of ill-luck, the next day punctially as Mr. Dawkinses brexfas was coming up the stairs, Mr. Halgernon Percy Deuceace was going down. He was as gay as a lark, humming an Oppra tune, and twizzting round his head his hevy gold-headed cane. Down he went very fast, and by a most unlucky axdent struck his cane against the waiter's tray, and away went Mr. Dawkinses grill, kayann, kitchup, soda-water, and all! I can't think how my master should have choas such an exact time; to be sure, his windo looked upon the cort, and he could see every one who came into our door.

As soon as the axdent had took place, master was in such a rage as, to be sure, no man ever was in befor; he swear at the waiter in the most dreddfle way; he threatened him with his stick, and it was only when he see that the waiter was rayther a bigger man than his self that he was in the least pazzified. He returned to his own chambres; and John the waiter, went off for more grill to Dixes Coffey-House.

"This is a most unlucky axdent, to be sure, Charles," says master to me, after a few minnits paws, during which he had been and wrote a note, put it into an anvelope, and

MR. DEUCEACE

sealed it with his big seal of arms. "But stay—a thought strikes me—take this note to Mr. Dawkins, and that pye you brought yesterday; and hearkye, you scoundrel, if you say where you got it I will break every bone in your skin!"

These kind of prommises were among the few which I knew him to keep; and as I loved boath my skinn and my boans, I carried the noat, and, of cors, said nothink. Waiting in Mr. Dawkinses chambus for a few minnits, I returned to my master with an anser. I may as well give both of these documence, of which I happen to have taken coppies.

I

The Hon. A. P. Deuceace to T. S. Dawkins, Esq.

"Temple, Tuesday.

"Mr. Deuceace presents his compliments to Mr. Dawkins, and begs at the same time to offer his most sincere apologies and regrets for the accident which has just taken place.

"May Mr. Deuceace be allowed to take a neighbour's privilege, and to remedy the evil he has occasioned to the best of his power? If Mr. Dawkins will do him the favour to partake of the contents of the accompanying case (from Strasburg direct, and the gift of a friend, on whose taste as a gourmand Mr. Dawkins may rely), perhaps he will find that it is not a bad substitute for the plat which Mr. Deuceace's awkwardness destroyed.

"It will, also, Mr. Deuceace is sure, be no small gratification to the original donor of the pâté, when he learns that it has fallen into the hands of so celebrated a bon vivant as Mr. Dawkins.

"T. S. Dawkins, Esq., etc. etc. etc."

II

From T. S. Dawkins, Esq., to the Hon. A. P. Deuceace.

"Mr. Thomas Smith Dawkins presents his grateful compliments to the Hon. Mr. Deuceace, and accepts with the greatest pleasure Mr. Deuceace's generous proffer.

"It would be one of the happiest moments of Mr. Smith

W. M. THACKERAY

Dawkins's life, if the Hon. Mr. Deuceace would extend his generosity still further, and condescend to partake of the repast which his munificent politeness has furnished.

"Temple, Tuesday."

Many and many a time, I say, have I grind over these letters, which I had wrote from the original by Mr. Bruffy's copyin clark. Deuceace flam about Prince Tallyram was puffickly successful. I saw young Dawkins blush with delite as he red the note; he toar up for or five sheets before he composed the anser to it, which was as you red abuff, and roat in a hand quite trembling with pleasyer. If you could but have seen the look of triumph in Deuceace's wicked black eyes, when he read the noat! I never see a deamin yet, but I can phansy 1, a holding a writhing soal on his pitchfrock, and smilin like Deuceace. He dressed himself in his very best clothes, and in he went, after sending me over to say that he would xcept with pleasyour Mr. Dawkins's invite.

The pie was cut up, and a most frenly conversation begun betwixt the two genlmin. Deuceace was quite captivating. He spoke to Mr. Dawkins in the most respectfuk and flatrin manner,—agread in every think he said,—prazed his taste, his furniter, his coat, his classick nolledge, and his playin on the flook; you'd have thought, to hear him, that such a polygon of exlens as Dawkins did not breath,—that such a modest, sinsear, honrabble genlmin as Deuceace was to be seen no where xcept in Pump Cort. Poor Daw was complitly taken in. My master said he'd introduce him to the Duke of Doncaster, and Heaven knows how many nobs more, till Dawkins was quite intawsicated with pleasyour. I know as a fac (and it pretty well shows the young genlmin's carryter), that he went that very day and ordered a new coats, on propos to be introjuiced to the lords in.

But the best joak of all was at last. Singin, swagrin, and swarink—up stares came Mr. Dick Blewitt. He flung open Mr. Dawkins's door, shouting out, "Daw, my old buck, how are you?" when, all of a sudden, he sees Mr. Deuceace: his jor dropt, he turned chocky white, and then

MR. DEUCEACE

burnin red, and looked as if a stror would knock him down. "My dear Mr. Blewitt," says my master, smilin, and offring his hand, "how glad I am to see you! Mr. Dawkins and I were just talking about your pony! Pray sit down."

Blewitt did; and now was the question, who should sit the other out; but, law bless you! Mr. Blewitt was no match for my master; all the time he was fidgetty, silent, and sulky; on the contry, master was charmin. I never herd such a flow of conversatin, or so many wittacisms as he uttered. At last, completely beat, Mr. Blewitt took his leaf; that instant master followed him; and passin his arm through that of Mr. Dick, let him into our chambers, and began talkin to him in the most affable and affeckshnat manner.

But Dick was too angry to listen; at last, when master was telling him some long stoary about the Duke of Doncaster, Blewitt bust out—

"A plague on the Duke of Doncaster! Come, come, Mr. Deuceace, don't you be running your rigs upon me; I an't the man to be bamboozl'd by long-winded stories about dukes and duchesses. You think I don't know you; every man knows you, and your line of country. Yes, you're after young Dawkins there, and think to pluck him; but you shan't,—no, by — you shan't." (The reader must recklect that the oaths which interspussed Mr. B.'s convysation I have lift out.) Well, after he'd fired a wolley of 'em, Mr. Deuceace spoke as cool and slow as possbill.

"Heark ye, Blewitt. I know you to be one of the most infernal thieves and scoundrels unhung. If you attempt to hector with me, I will cane you; if you want more, I'll shoot you; if you meddle between me and Dawkins, I will do both. I know your whole life, you miserable swindler and coward. I know you have already won two hundred pounds of this lad, and want all. I will have half, or you never shall have a penny." It's quite true that master knew things; but how was the wonder.

I couldn't see Mr. B.'s face during this dialogue, bein on the wrong side of the door; but there was a considrabable paws after thuse complymints had passed between the two genlmen,—one walkin quickly up and down the room,

W. M. THACKERAY

—tother, angry and stupid, sittin down, and stampin with his foot.

"Now listen to this, Mr. Blewitt," continues master at last; "if you're quiet, you shall have half this fellow's money: but venture to win a shilling from him in my absence, or without my consent, and you do it at your peril."

"Well, well, Mr. Deuceace," cries Dick, "it's very hard, and, I must say, not fair: the game was of my starting, and you've no right to interfere with my friend."

"Mr. Blewitt, you are a fool! You professed yesterday not to know this man, and I was obliged to find him out for myself. I should like to know by what law of honour I am bound to give him up to you?"

It was charmin to hear this pair of raskles talkin about honour. I declare I could have found it in my heart to warn young Dawkins of the precious way in which these chaps were going to serve him. But if they didn't know what honour was, I did; and never, never did I tell tails about my masters when in their sarvice—out, in cors, the hobligation is no longer binding.

Well, the nex day there was a gran dinner at our chambers. White soop, turbit, and lobster sos; saddil of Scoch muttn, grouse, and M'Arony; wines, shampang, hock, madeiria, a bottle of poart, and ever so many of clarrit. The compny presint was three; wiz., the Honrabble A. P. Deuceace, R. Blewitt, and Mr. Dawkins, Exquires. My i, how we genlmn in the kitchin did enjy it! Mr. Blewittes man eat so much grouse (when it was brot out of the parlor), that I reely thought he would be sik; Mr. Dawkinses genlmn (who was only abowt 13 years of age) grew so il with M'Arony and plumb-puddn, so to be obleeged to take sefral of Mr. D.'s pils, which one-half kild him. But this is all promiscuous: I an't talkin of the survants now, but the masters.

Would you bleeve it? After dinner (and praps 8 bottles of wine betwin the 3) the genlmn sat down to écarty. It's a game where only 2 plays, and where, in coarse, when there's ony 3, one looks on.

Fust, they playd crown pints, and a pound the bett. At this game they were wonderful equill; and about supper-time (when grilled am, more shampang, devld biskits, and

MR. DEUCEACE

other things, was brot in) the play stood thus: Mr. Dawkins had won 2 pounds; Mr. Blewitt, 30 shillings; the Honrabble Mr. Deuceace having lost £3.10s. After the devvle and the shampang the play was a little higher. Now it was pound pints, and five pound the bet. I thought, to be sure, after hearing the compliments between Blewitt and master in the morning, that now pore Dawkins's time was come.

Not so: Dawkins won always, Mr. B. betting on his play, and giving him the very best of advice. At the end of the evening (which was abowt five o'clock the nex morning) they stopt. Master was counting up the skore on a card.

"Blewitt," says he, "I've been unlucky. I owe you—let me see—yes, five-and-forty pounds?"

"Five-and-forty," says Blewitt, "and no mistake!"

"I will give you a cheque," says the honrabble genlmn.

"Oh! don't mention it, my dear sir!" But master got a grate sheet of paper, and drew him a check on Messeers. Pump, Algit, and Co., his bankers.

"Now," says master, "I've got to settle with you, my dear Mr. Dawkins. If you had backd your luck, I should have owed you a very handsome sum of money. Voyons: thirteen points, at a pound—it is easy to calculate;" and, drawin out his puss, he clinked over the table 13 goolden suverings, which shon till they made my eyes wink.

So did pore Dawkinses, as he put out his hand, all trembling, and drew them in.

"Let me say," added master, "let me say (and I've had some little experience), that you are the very best écarté player with whom I ever sat down."

Dawkinses eyes glissened as he put the money up, and said, "Law, Deuceace, you flatter me."

Flatter him! I should think he did. It was the very thing which master ment.

"But mind you, Dawkins," continyoud he, "I must have my revenge; for I'm ruined—positively ruined—by your luck."

"Well, well," says Mr. Thomas Smith Dawkins, as pleased as if he had gained a millium, "shall it be to-morrow? Blewitt, what say you!"

W. M. THACKERAY

Mr. Blewitt agreed, in course. My master, after a little demurring, consented too. "We'll meet," says he, "at your chambers. But mind, my dear fello, not too much wine! I can't stand it at any time, especially when I have to play écarté with you."

Pore Dawkins left our rooms as happy as a prin. "Here, Charles," says he, and flung me a sovring. Pore fellow! pore fellow! I know what was a comin!

* * * * *

But the best of it was, that these 13 sornings which Dawkins won, master had borrowed them from Mr. Blewitt! I brought 'em, with 7 more, from that young genl'mn's chambers that very morning: for, since his interview with master, Blewitt had nothing to refuse him.

* * * * *

Well, shall I continue the tale? If Mr. Dawkins had been the least bit wiser, it would have taken him six months befoar he lost his money; as it was, he was such a confounded ninny, that it took him a very short time to part with it.

Nex day (it was Thursday, and master's acquaintance with Mr. Dawkins had only commenced on Tuesday), Mr. Dawkins, as I said, gev his party,—dinner at 7. Mr. Blewitt and the two Mr. D.'s as befoar. Play begins at 11. This time I knew the bishness was pretty serious, for we suvvants was packed off to bed at 2 o'clock. On Friday, I went to chambers—no master—he kem in for 3 minutes at about 12, made a little toilit, ordered more devvles and soda-water, and back again he went to Mr. Dawkins's.

They had dinner there at 7 again, but nobody seemed to eat, for all the vittles came out to us genl'mn; they had in more wine though, and must have drunk at least two dozen in the 36 hours.

At ten o'clock, however, on Friday night, back my master came to his chambers. I saw him as I never saw him before, namly, reglar drunk. He staggered about the room, he danced, he hickipd, he swoar, he flung me a heap of silver, and, finely, he sunk down exosted on his bed; I pullin off his boots and close, and making him comfrabble.

When I had removed his garmints, I did what it's the

MR. DEUCEACE

duty of every servant to do—I emptied his pockets, and looked at his pocket-book and all his letters: a number of accidents have been prevented that way.

I found there, among a heap of things, the following pretty dockymment:

I. O. U.

£ 4700

THOMAS SMITH DAWKINS

*Friday,
16th January*

There was another bit of paper of the same kind—"I.O.U. four hundred pounds, Richard Blewitt:" but this, in cōrs, ment nothink.

* * * * *

Nex mornin, at nine, master was up, and as sober as a judg. He drest, and was off to Mr. Dawkins. At 10, he ordered a cab, and the two genlm went together.

"Where shall he drive, sir?" says I.

"Oh, tell him to drive to the Bank."

Pore Dawkins! his eyes red with remors and sleepless drunkenniss, gave a shudder and a sob, as he sunk back in the wehicle; and they drove on.

That day he sold out every hapny he was worth, xcept five hundred pounds.

* * * * *

Abowt 12 master had returned, and Mr. Dick Blewitt came stridin up the stairs with a sollum and important hair.

"Is your master at home?" says he.

"Yes, sir," says I; and in he walks. I, in coars, with my ear to the keyhole, listening with all my mite.

"Well," says Blewitt, "we maid a pretty good night of it, Mr. Deuceace. You've settled, I see, with Dawkins."

MR. DEUCEACE

"Settled!" says master. "Oh yes—yes—I've settled with him."

"Four thousand seven hundred, I think?"

"About that—yes."

"That makes my share—let me see—two thousand three hundred and fifty; which I'll thank you to fork out."

"Upon my word—why—Mr. Blewitt," says my master, "I don't really understand what you mean."

"You don't know what I mean!" says Blewitt, in an axent such as I never before heard. "You don't know what I mean! Did you not promise me that we were to go shares? Didn't I lend you twenty sovereigns the other night to pay our losings to Dawkins? Didn't you swear, on your honour as a gentleman, to give me half of all that might be won in this affair?"

"Agreed, sir," says Deuceace; "agreed."

"Well, sir, and now what have you to say?"

"Why, that I don't intend to keep my promise! You infernal fool and ninny! do you suppose I was labouring for you? Do you fancy I was going to the expense of giving a dinner to that jackass yonder, that you should profit by it? Get away, sir! Leave the room, sir! Or, stop—here—I will give you four hundred pounds—your own note of hand, sir, for that sum, if you will consent to forget all that has passed between us, and that you have never known Mr. Algernon Deuceace."

I've sean pipple angry before now, but never any like Blewitt. He stormed, groaned, belloed, swoar! At last, he fairly began blubbrin; now cussing and nashing his teeth, now praying dear Mr. Deuceace to grant him mercy.

At last, master flung open the door (Heavn bless us! it's well I didn't tumble hed over eels, into the room!) and said, "Charles, show the gentleman down stairs!" My master looked at him quite steddly. Blewitt slunk down, as miserabbe as any man I ever see. As for Dawkins, Heaven knows where he was!

* * * * *

"Charles," says my master to me, about an hour afterwards, "I am going to Paris; you may come, too, if you please."

THE BROTHERS
BY EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

THE BROTHERS A TALE¹

By EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

YOU must imagine, then, dear Gertrude (said Trevilian), a beautiful summer day, and by the same faculty that none possess so richly as yourself, for it is you who can kindle something of that divine spark even in me, you must rebuild those shattered towers in the pomp of old; raise the gallery and the hall; man the battlements with warders, and give the proud banners of ancestral chivalry to wave upon the walls. But above, sloping half down the rock, you must fancy the hanging gardens of Liebenstein, fragrant with flowers, and basking in the noonday sun.

On the greenest turf, underneath an oak, there sat three persons, in the bloom of youth. Two of the three were brothers; the third was an orphan girl, whom the lord of the opposite tower of Sternfels had bequeathed to the protection of his brother, the chief of Liebenstein. The castle itself and the demesne that belonged to it passed away from the female line, and became the heritage of Otho, the orphan's cousin, and the younger of the two brothers now seated on the turf.

"And oh," said the elder, whose name was Warbeck, "you have twined a chaplet for my brother; have you not, dearest Leoline, a simple flower for me?"

The beautiful orphan—(for beautiful she was, Gertrude, as the heroine of the tale you bid me tell ought to be,—should she not have to the dreams of my fancy your lustrous hair, and your sweet smile, and your eyes of blue, that are never, never silent? Ah, pardon me that in a former tale

¹ This tale is, in reality, founded on the beautiful tradition which belongs to Liebenstein and Sternfels.

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

I denied the heroine the beauty of your face, and remember that, to atone for it, I endowed her with the beauty of your mind)—the beautiful orphan blushed to her temples, and culling from the flowers in her lap the freshest of the roses, began weaving them into a wreath for Warbeck.

"It would be better," said the gay Otho, "to make my sober brother a chaplet of the rue and cypress; the rose is much too bright a flower for so serious a knight."

Leoline held up her hand reprovingly.

"Let him laugh, dearest cousin," said Warbeck, gazing passionately on her changing cheek: "and thou, Leoline, believe that the silent stream runs the deepest."

At this moment, they heard the voice of the old chief, their father, calling aloud for Leoline; for ever, when he returned from the chase, he wanted her gentle presence; and the hall was solitary to him if the light sound of her step, and the music of her voice, were not heard in welcome.

Leoline hastened to her guardian, and the brothers were left alone.

Nothing could be more dissimilar than the features and the respective characters of Otho and Warbeck. Otho's countenance was flushed with the brown hues of health; his eyes were of the brightest hazel: his dark hair wreathed in short curls round his open and fearless brow; the jest ever echoed on his lips, and his step was bounding as the foot of the hunter of the Alps. Bold and light was his spirit; if at times he betrayed the haughty insolence of youth, he felt generously, and though not ever ready to confess sorrow for a fault, he was at least ready to brave peril for a friend.

But Warbeck's frame, though of equal strength, was more slender in its proportions than that of his brother; the fair long hair that characterised his northern race hung on either side of a countenance calm and pale, and deeply impressed with thought, even to sadness. His features, more majestic and regular than Otho's, rarely varied in their expression. More resolute even than Otho, he was less impetuous; more impassioned, he was also less capricious.

The brothers remained silent after Leoline had left them. Otho carelessly braced on his sword, that he had laid aside on the grass; but Warbeck gathered up the flowers that had

THE BROTHERS

been touched by the soft hand of Leoline, and placed them in his bosom.

The action disturbed Otho; he bit his lip, and changed colour; at length he said, with a forced laugh:

"It must be confessed, brother, that you carry your affection for our fair cousin to a degree that even relationship seems scarcely to warrant."

"It is true," said Warbeck, calmly: "I love her with a love surpassing that of blood."

"How!" said Otho, fiercely: "do you dare to think of Leoline as a bride?"

"Dare!" repeated Warbeck, turning yet paler than his wonted hue.

"Yes, I have said the word! Know, Warbeck, that I, too, love Leoline; I, too, claim her as my bride; and never, while I can wield a sword—never, while I wear the spurs of knighthood, will I render my claim to a living rival. Even," he added (sinking his voice), "though that rival be my brother!"

Warbeck answered not; his very soul seemed stunned; he gazed long and wistfully on his brother, and then, turning his face away, ascended the rock without uttering a single word.

This silence startled Otho. Accustomed to vent every emotion of his own, he could not comprehend the forbearance of his brother; he knew his high and brave nature too well to imagine that it arose from fear. Might it not be contempt, or might he not, at this moment, intend to seek their father; and, the first to proclaim his love for the orphan, advance, also, the privilege of the elder born? As these suspicions flashed across him, the haughty Otho strode to his brother's side, and laying his hand on his arm, said: "Whither goes thou? and dost thou consent to surrender Leoline?"

"Does she love thee, Otho?" answered Warbeck, breaking silence at last; and his voice spoke so deep an anguish, that it arrested the passions of Otho even at their height.

"It is thou who art now silent," continued Warbeck; "speak, doth she love thee, and has her lip confessed it?"

"I have believed that she loved me," faltered Otho;

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

"but she is of maiden bearing, and her lip, at least, has never told it."

"Enough," said Warbeck; "release your hold."

"Stay," said Otho, his suspicions returning; "stay—yet one word; dost thou seek my father? He ever honoured thee more than me: wilt thou own to him thy love, and insist on thy right of birth? By my soul and my hope of heaven, do it, and one of us two must fall!"

"Poor boy!" answered Warbeck, bitterly; "how little thou canst read the heart of one who loves truly! Thinkest thou I would wed her if she loved thee? Thinkest thou I could, even to be blessed myself, give her one moment's pain? Out on the thought—away!"

"Then wilt not thou seek our father?" said Otho, abashed.

"Our father!—has our father the keeping of Leoline's affection?" answered Warbeck; and shaking off his brother's grasp, he sought the way to the castle.

As he entered the hall, he heard the voice of Leoline; she was singing to the old chief one of the simple ballads of the time, that the warrior and the hunter loved to hear. He paused lest he should break the spell (a spell stronger than a sorcerer's to him), and gazing upon Leoline's beautiful form, his heart sank within him. His brother and himself had each that day, as they sat in the gardens, given her a flower; his flower was the fresher and the rarer; his he saw not, but she wore his brother's in her bosom!

The chief, lulled by the music and wearied with the toils of the chase, sank into sleep as the song ended, and Warbeck, coming forward, motioned to Leoline to follow him. He passed into a retired and solitary walk, and when they were a little distance from the castle, Warbeck turned round, and taking Leoline's hand, gently said:

"Let us rest here for one moment, dearest cousin; I have much on my heart to say to thee."

"And what is there," answered Leoline, as they sat on a mossy bank, with the broad Rhine glancing below, "what is there that my kind Warbeck would ask of me? Ah! would it might be some favour, something in poor Leoline's power to grant; for ever from my birth you have been to

THE BROTHERS

me most tender, most kind. You, I have often heard them say, taught my first steps to walk; you formed my infant lips into language, and, in after years, when my wild cousin was far away in the forests at the chase, you would brave his gay jest and remain at home, lest Leoline should be weary in the solitude. Ah, would I could repay you!"

Warbeck turned away his cheek; his heart was very full, and it was some moments before he summoned courage to reply.

"My fair cousin," said he, "those were happy days; but they were the days of childhood. New cares and new thoughts have now come on us. But I am still thy friend, Leoline, and still thou wilt confide in me thy young sorrows and thy young hopes as thou ever didst. Wilt thou not, Leoline?"

"Canst thou ask me?" said Leoline; and Warbeck, gazing on her face, saw that though her eyes were full of tears, they yet looked steadily upon his; and he knew that she loved him only as a sister.

He sighed, and paused again ere he resumed. "Enough," said he; "now to my task. Once on a time, dear cousin, there lived among these mountains a certain chief who had two sons, and an orphan like thyself dwelt also in his halls. And the elder son—but no matter, let us not waste words on him!—the younger son, then, loved the orphan dearly—more dearly than cousins love; and fearful of refusal, he prayed the elder one to urge his suit to the orphan. Leoline, my tale is done. Canst thou not love Otho as he loves thee?"

And now lifting his eyes to Leoline, he saw that she trembled violently, and her cheek was covered with blushes.

"Say," continued he, mastering himself; "is not that flower (his present) a token that he is chiefly in thy thoughts?"

"Ah, Warbeck! do not deem me ungrateful that I wear not yours also: but——"

"Hush," said Warbeck, hastily; "I am but as thy brother; is not Otho more? He is young, brave, and beautiful. God

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

grant that he may deserve thee, if thou givest him so rich a gift as thy affections."

"I saw less of Otho in my childhood," said Leoline, evasively; "therefore, his kindness of late years seemed stranger to me than thine."

"And thou wilt not then reject him? Thou wilt be his bride?"

"And thy sister," answered Leoline.

"Bless thee, mine own dear cousin! one brother's kiss then, and farewell! Otho shall thank thee for himself."

He kissed her forehead calmly, and, turning away, plunged into the thicket; then, nor till then, he gave vent to such emotions as, had Leoline seen them, Otho's suit had been lost for ever; for passionately, deeply as in her fond and innocent heart she loved Otho, the happiness of Warbeck was not less dear to her.

When the young knight had recovered his self-possession he went in search of Otho. He found him alone in the wood, leaning with folded arms against a tree, and gazing moodily on the ground. Warbeck's noble heart was touched at his brother's dejection.

"Cheer thee, Otho," said he; "I bring thee no bad tidings; I have seen Leoline—I have conversed with her—nay, start not—she loves thee! she is thine!"

"Generous—generous Warbeck!" exclaimed Otho, and he threw himself on his brother's neck. "No, no," said he, "this must not be; thou hast the elder claim—I resign her to thee. Forgive me my waywardness, brother, forgive me!"

"Think of the past no more," said Warbeck; "the love of Leoline is an excuse for greater offences than thine. And now, be kind to her; her nature is soft and keen. I know her well; for I have studied her faintest wish. Thou art hasty and quick of ire; but remember that a word wounds where love is deep. For my sake, as for hers, think more of her happiness than thine own; now seek her—she waits to hear from thy lips the tale that sounded cold upon mine."

With that he left his brother, and, once more re-entering the castle, he went into the hall of his ancestors. His father still slept; he put his hand on his grey hair, and blessed him; then stealing up to his chamber, he braced on

THE BROTHERS

his helm and armour, and thrice kissing the hilt of his sword, said, with a flushed cheek:

"Henceforth be thou my bride!" Then passing from the castle, he sped by the most solitary paths down the rock, gained the Rhine, and hailing one of the numerous fishermen of the river, won the opposite shore; and alone, but not sad, for his high heart supported him, and Leoline at least was happy, he hastened to Frankfort.

The town was all gaiety and life, arms clanged at every corner, the sounds of martial music, the wave of banners, the glittering of plumed casques, the neighing of war-steeds, all united to stir the blood and inflame the sense. St. Bertrand had lifted the sacred cross along the shores of the Rhine, and the streets of Frankfort witnessed with what success!

On that same day Warbeck assumed the sacred badge, and was enlisted among the knights of the Emperor Conrad.

We must suppose some time to have elapsed, and Otho and Leoline were not yet wedded; for, in the first fervour of his gratitude to his brother, Otho had proclaimed to his father and to Leoline the conquest Warbeck had obtained over himself; and Leoline, touched to the heart, would not consent that the wedding should take place immediately. "Let him, at least," said she, "not be insulted by a premature festivity; and give him time, amongst the lofty beauties he will gaze upon in a far country, to forget, Otho, that he once loved her who is the beloved of thee."

The old chief applauded this delicacy; and even Otho, in the first flush of his feelings towards his brother, did not venture to oppose it. They settled, then, that the marriage should take place at the end of a year.

Months rolled away, and an absent and moody gloom settled upon Otho's brow. In his excursions with his gay companions among the neighbouring towns he heard of nothing but the glory of the Crusaders, of the homage paid to the heroes of the Cross at the courts they visited, of the adventures of their life, and the exciting spirit that animated their war. In fact, neither minstrel nor priest suffered the theme to grow cold; and the fame of those who

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

had gone forth to the holy strife gave at once emulation and discontent to the youths who remained behind.

"And my brother enjoys this ardent and glorious life," said the impatient Otho; "while I, whose arm is as strong, and whose heart is as bold, languish here listening to the dull tales of a hoary sire and the silly songs of an orphan girl." His heart smote him at the last sentence, but he had already begun to weary of the gentle love of Leoline. Perhaps when he had no longer to gain a triumph over a rival the excitement palled; or perhaps his proud spirit secretly chafed at being conquered by his brother in generosity, even when outshining him in the success of love.

But poor Leoline, once taught that she was to consider Otho her betrothed, surrendered her heart entirely to his control. His wild spirit, his dark beauty, his daring valour, won while they awed her; and in the fitfulness of his nature were those perpetual springs of hope and fear that are the fountains of ever-agitated love. She saw with increasing grief the change that was growing over Otho's mind; nor did she divine the cause. "Surely I have not offended him?" thought she.

Among the companions of Otho was one who possessed a singular sway over him. He was a knight of that mysterious order of the Temple, which exercised at one time so great a command over the minds of men.

A severe and dangerous wound in a brawl with an English knight had confined the Templar at Frankfort, and prevented his joining the Crusade. During his slow recovery he had formed an intimacy with Otho, and, taking up his residence at the castle of Liebenstein, had been struck with the beauty of Leoline. Prevented by his oath from marriage, he allowed himself a double license in love, and doubted not, could he disengage the young knight from his betrothed, that she would add a new conquest to the many he had already achieved. Artfully therefore he painted to Otho the various attractions of the Holy Cause; and, above all, he failed not to describe, with glowing colours, the beauties who, in the gorgeous East, distinguished with a prodigal favour the warriors of the Cross. Dowries, unknown in the more sterile mountains of the Rhine, accom-

THE BROTHERS

panied the hand of these beauteous maidens; and even a prince's daughter was not deemed, he said, too lofty a marriage for the heroes who might win kingdoms for themselves.

"To me," said the Templar, "such hopes are eternally denied. But you, were you not already betrothed, what fortunes might await you!"

By such discourses the ambition of Otho was perpetually aroused; they served to deepen his discontent at his present obscurity, and to convert to distaste the only solace it afforded in the innocence and affection of Leoline.

One night, a minstrel sought shelter from the storm in the halls of Liebenstein. His visit was welcomed by the chief, and he repaid the hospitality he had received by the exercise of his art. He sang of the chase, and the gaunt hound started from the hearth. He sang of love, and Otho, forgetting his restless dreams, approached to Leoline, and laid himself at her feet. Louder then and louder rose the strain. The minstrel sang of war; he painted the feats of the Crusaders; he plunged into the thickest of the battle; the steed neighed; the trump sounded; and you might have heard the ringing of the steel. But when he came to signalise the names of the boldest knights, high among the loftiest sounded the name of Sir Warbeck of Liebenstein. Thrice had he saved the imperial banner; two chargers slain beneath him, he had covered their bodies with the fiercest of the foe. Gentle in the tent and terrible in the fray, the minstrel should forget his craft ere the Rhine should forget its hero. The chief started from his seat. Leoline clasped the minstrel's hand.

"Speak,—you have seen him—he lives—he is honoured?"

"I myself am but just from Palestine, brave chief and noble maiden. I saw the gallant knight of Liebenstein at the right hand of the imperial Conrad. And he, ladye, was the only knight whom admiration shone upon without envy, its shadow. Who then" (continued the minstrel, once more striking his harp), "who then would remain inglorious in the hall? Shall not the banners of his sires reproach him as they wave? and shall not every voice from Palestine strike shame into his soul?"

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

"Right," cried Otho, suddenly, and flinging himself at the feet of his father. "Thou hearest what my brother has done, and thine aged eyes weep tears of joy. Shall I only dishonour thine old age with a rusted sword? No! grant me, like my brother, to go forth with the heroes of the Cross!"

"Noble youth," cried the harper, "therein speaks the soul of Sir Warbeck; hear him, sir knight,—hear the noble youth."

"Heaven cries aloud in his voice," said the Templar, solemnly.

"My son, I cannot chide thine ardour," said the old chief, raising him with trembling hands; "but Leoline, thy betrothed?"

Pale as a statue, with ears that doubted their sense as they drank in the cruel words of her lover, stood the orphan. She did not speak, she scarcely breathed; she sank into her seat, and gazed upon the ground, till, at the speech of the chief, both maiden pride and maiden tenderness restored her consciousness, and she said:

"I, uncle!—Shall I bid Otho stay when his wishes bid him depart?"

"He will return to thee, noble ladye, covered with glory," said the harper: but Otho said no more. The touching voice of Leoline went to his soul; he resumed his seat in silence; and Leoline, going up to him, whispered gently, "Act as though I were not;" and left the hall to commune with her heart and to weep alone.

"I can wed her before I go," said Otho, suddenly, as he sat that night in the Templar's chamber.

"Why, that is true! and leave thy bride in the first week—a hard trial!"

"Better than incur the chance of never calling her mine. Dear, kind, beloved Leoline!"

"Assuredly, she deserves all from thee; and, indeed, it is no small sacrifice, at thy years and with thy mien, to renounce for ever all interest among the noble maidens thou wilt visit. Ah, from the galleries of Constantinople what eyes will look down on thee, and what ears, learning that thou art Otho the bridegroom, will turn away, caring for thee no more! A bridegroom without a bride! Nay, man,

THE BROTHERS

much as the Cross wants warriors, I am enough thy friend to tell thee, if thou weddest, to stay peaceably at home, and forget in the chase the labours of war, from which thou wouldst strip the ambition of love."

"I would I knew what were best," said Otho, irresolutely. "My brother—ha, shall he for ever excel me?—But Leoline, how will she grieve—she who left him for me!"

"Was that thy fault?" said the Templar, gaily. "It may many times chance to thee again to be preferred to another. Troth, it is a sin under which the conscience may walk lightly enough. But sleep on it, Otho; my eyes grow heavy."

The next day Otho sought Leoline, and proposed to her that their wedding should precede his parting; but so embarrassed was he, so divided between two wishes, that Leoline, offended, hurt, stung by his coldness, refused the proposal at once. She left him lest he should see her weep, and then—then she repented even of her just pride.

But Otho, striving to appease his conscience with the belief that hers now was the sole fault, busied himself in preparations for his departure. Anxious to outshine his brother, he departed not as Warbeck, alone and unattended, but levying all the horse, men, and money that his domain of Sternfels—which he had not yet tenanted—would afford, he repaired to Frankfort at the head of a glittering troop.

The Templar, affecting a relapse, tarried behind, and promised to join him at that Constantinople of which he had so loudly boasted. Meanwhile he devoted his whole powers of pleasing to console the unhappy orphan. The force of her simple love was, however, stronger than all his arts. In vain he insinuated doubts of Otho; she refused to hear them: in vain he poured with the softest accents into her ear the witchery of flattery and song: she turned heedlessly away; and only pained by the courtesies that had so little resemblance to Otho, she shut herself up in her chamber, and pined in solitude for her forsaker.

The Templar now resolved to attempt darker arts to obtain power over her, when, fortunately, he was summoned suddenly away by a mission from the Grand Master, of so high import that it could not be resisted by a passion stronger in his breast than love—the passion of ambition.

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

He left the castle to its solitude; and Otho peopling it no more with his gay companions, no solitude could be more unfrequently disturbed.

Meanwhile, though, ever and anon, the fame of Warbeck reached their ears, it came unaccompanied with that of Otho, —of him they had no tidings: and thus the love of the tender orphan was kept alive by the perpetual restlessness of fear. At length the old chief died, and Leoline was left utterly alone.

One evening as she sat with her maidens in the hall, the ringing of a steed's hoofs was heard in the outer court; a horn sounded, the heavy gates were unbarred, and a knight of a stately mien and covered with the mantle of the Cross entered the hall; he stopped for one moment at the entrance, as if overpowered by his emotion; in the next he had clasped Leoline to his breast.

"Dost thou not recognise thy cousin Warbeck?" He doffed his casque, and she saw that majestic brow which, unlike Otho's, had never changed or been clouded in its aspect to her.

"The war is suspended for the present," said he. "I learned my father's death, and I have returned home to hang up my banner in the hall and spend my days in peace."

Time and the life of camps had worked their change upon Warbeck's face; the fair hair, deepened in its shade, was worn from the temples, and disclosed one scar that rather aided the beauty of a countenance that had always something high and martial in its character: but the calm it had once worn had settled down into sadness; he conversed more rarely than before, and though he smiled not less often, nor less kindly, the smile had more of thought, and the kindness had forgot its passion. He had apparently conquered a love that was so early crossed, but not that fidelity of remembrance which made Leoline dearer to him than all others, and forbade him to replace the images he had graven upon his soul.

The orphan's lips trembled with the name of Otho, but a certain recollection stifled even her anxiety. Warbeck hastened to forestall her questions.

"Otho was well," he said, "and sojourning at Constan-

THE BROTHERS

tinople; he had lingered there so long that the crusade had terminated without his aid: doubtless now he would speedily return;—a month, a week, nay, a day might restore him to her side.”

Leoline was inexpressibly consoled, yet something remained untold. Why, so eager for the strife of the sacred tomb had he thus tarried at Constantinople? She wondered, she wearied conjecture, but she did not dare to search farther.

The generous Warbeck concealed from her that Otho led a life of the most reckless and indolent dissipation;—wasting his wealth in the pleasures of the Greek court, and only occupying his ambition with the wild schemes of founding a principality in those foreign climes, which the enterprises of the Norman adventurers had rendered so alluring to the knightly bandits of the age.

The cousins resumed their old friendship, and Warbeck believed that it was friendship alone. They walked again among the gardens in which their childhood had strayed; they sat again on the green turf whereon they had woven flowers; they looked down on the eternal mirror of the Rhine;—ah! could it have reflected the same unawakened freshness of their life's early spring!

The grave and contemplative mind of Warbeck had not been so contented with the honours of war, but that it had sought also those calmer sources of emotion which were yet found amongst the sages of the East. He had drunk at the fountain of the wisdom of those distant climes, and had acquired the habits of meditation which were indulged by those wiser tribes from which the Crusaders brought back to the North the knowledge that was destined to enlighten their posterity. Warbeck, therefore, had little in common with the ruder chiefs around: he did not summon them to his board, nor attend at their noisy wassails. Often late at night, in yon shattered tower, his lonely lamp shone still over the mighty stream, and his only relief to loneliness was in the presence and the song of his soft cousin.

Months rolled on, when suddenly a vague and fearful rumour reached the castle of Liebenstein. Otho was returning home to the neighbouring tower of Sternfels; but not alone. He brought back with him a Greek bride of sur-

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

prising beauty, and dowered with almost regal wealth. Leoline was the first to discredit the rumour; Leoline was soon the only one who disbelieved.

Bright in the summer noon flashed the array of horsemen; far up the steep ascent wound the gorgeous cavalcade; the lonely towers of Liebenstein heard the echo of many a laugh and peal of merriment. Otho bore home his bride to the hall of Sternfels.

That night there was a great banquet in Otho's castle; the lights shown from every casement, and music swelled loud and ceaselessly within.

By the side of Otho, glittering with the prodigal jewels of the East, sat the Greek. Her dark locks, her flashing eye, the false colours of her complexion, dazzled the eyes of her guests. On her left hand sat the Templar.

"By the holy rood," quoth the Templar, gaily, though he crossed himself as he spoke, "we shall scare the owls to-night on those grim towers of Liebenstein. Thy grave brother, Sir Otho, will have much to do to comfort his cousin when she sees what a gallant life she would have led with thee."

"Poor damsel!" said the Greek, with affected pity, "doubtless she will now be reconciled to the rejected one. I hear he is a knight of a comely mien."

"Peace!" said Otho, sternly, and quaffing a large goblet of wine.

The Greek bit her lip, and glanced meaningly at the Templar, who returned the glance.

"Nought but a beauty such as thine can win my pardon," said Otho, turning to his bride, and gazing passionately in her face.

The Greek smiled.

Well sped the feast, the laugh deepened, the wine circled, when Otho's eye rested on a guest at the bottom of the board, whose figure was mantled from head to foot, and whose face was covered by a dark veil.

"Beshrew me!" said he, aloud, "but this is scarce courteous at our revel: will the stranger vouchsafe to unmask?"

These words turned all eyes to the figure, and they who sat next it perceived that it trembled violently; at length it

THE BROTHERS

rose, and walking slowly, but with grace, to the fair Greek, it laid beside her a wreath of flowers.

"It is a simple gift, ladye," said the stranger, in a voice of such sweetness that the rudest guest was touched by it. "But it is all I can offer, and the bride of Otho should not be without a gift at my hands. May ye both be happy!"

With these words, the stranger turned and passed from the hall silent as a shadow.

"Bring back the stranger!" cried the Greek, recovering her surprise. Twenty guests sprang up to obey her mandate.

"No, no!" said Otho, waving his hand impatiently. "Touch her not, heed her not, at your peril."

The Greek bent over the flowers to conceal her anger, and from amongst them dropped the broken half of a ring. Otho recognised it at once; it was the broken half of that ring which he had broken with his betrothed. Alas, he required not such a sign to convince him that that figure, so full of ineffable grace, that touching voice, that simple action so tender in its sentiment, that gift, that blessing, came only from the forsaken and forgiving Leoline.

But Warbeck, alone in his solitary tower, paced to and fro with agitated steps. Deep, undying wrath at his brother's falsehood mingled with one burning, one delicious hope. He confessed now that he had deceived himself when he thought his passion was no more; was there any longer a bar to his union with Leoline?

In that delicacy which was breathed into him by his love, he had forborne to seek, or to offer her the insult of consolation. He felt that the shock should be borne alone, and yet he pined, he thirsted, to throw himself at her feet.

Nursing these contending thoughts, he was aroused by a knock at his door: he opened it—the passage was thronged by Leoline's maidens; pale, anxious, weeping. Leoline had left the castle with but one female attendant; none knew whither;—they knew too soon. From the hall of Sternfels she had passed over in the dark and inclement night to the valley in which the convent of Bornhofen offered to the weary of spirit and the broken of heart a refuge at the shrine of God.

At daybreak the next morning, Warbeck was at the convent's gate. He saw Leoline: what a change one night of

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

suffering had made in that face, which was the fountain of all loveliness to him! He clasped her in his arms; he wept; he urged all that love could urge: he besought her to accept that heart which had never wronged her memory by a thought. "Oh, Leoline! didst thou not say once that these arms nursed thy childhood; that this voice soothed thine early sorrows? Ah, trust to them again and for ever. From a love that forsook thee turn to the love that never swerved."

"No," said Leoline; "no. What would the chivalry of which thou art the boast—what would they say of thee, wert thou to wed one affianced and deserted, who tarried years for another, and brought to thine arms only that heart which he had abandoned? No; and even if thou, as I know thou wouldst be, wert callous to such wrong of thy high name, shall I bring to thee a broken heart and bruised spirit? shalt thou wed sorrow and not joy? and shall sighs that will not cease, and tears that may not be dried, be the only dowry of thy bride? Thou, too, for whom all blessings should be ordained? No, forget me; forget thy poor Leoline! She hath nothing but prayers for thee."

In vain Warbeck pleaded; in vain he urged all that passion and truth could urge; the springs of earthly love were for ever dried up in the orphan's heart, and her resolution was immovable—she tore herself from his arms, and the gate of the convent creaked harshly on his ear.

A new and stern emotion now wholly possessed him; though naturally mild and gentle, he cherished anger, when once it was aroused, with the strength of a calm mind. Leoline's tears, her sufferings, her wrongs, her uncomplaining spirit, the change already stamped upon her face, all cried aloud to him for vengeance. "She is an orphan," said he, bitterly; "she hath none to protect, to redress her, save me alone. My father's charge over her forlorn youth descends of right to me. What matters it whether her forsaker be my brother? He is her foe. Hath he not crushed her heart? Hath he not consigned her to sorrow till the grave? And with what insult! no warning, no excuse; with lewd wassailers keeping revel for his new bridals in the hearing—before the sight—of his betrothed! Enough! the time hath come when, to use his own words, 'One of us two

THE BROTHERS

must fall!" He half drew his sword as he spoke, and thrusting it back violently into the sheath, strode home to his solitary castle. The sound of steeds and of the hunting-horn met him at his portal; the bridal train of Sternfels, all mirth and gladness, were parting for the chase.

That evening a knight in complete armour entered the banquet-hall of Sternfels, and defied Otho, on the part of Warbeck of Liebenstein, to mortal combat.

Even the Templar was startled by so unnatural a challenge; but Otho, reddening, took up the gage, and the day and spot were fixed. Discontented, wroth with himself, a savage gladness seized him;—he longed to wreak his desperate feelings even on his brother. Nor had he ever in his jealous heart forgiven that brother his virtues and his renown.

At the appointed hour the brothers met as foes. Warbeck's vizor was up, and all the settled sternness of his soul was stamped upon his brow. But Otho, more willing to brave the arm than to face the front of his brother, kept his vizor down; the Templar stood by him with folded arms. It was a study in human passions to his mocking mind. Scarce had the first trump sounded to this dread conflict, when a new actor entered on the scene. The rumour of so unprecedented an event had not failed to reach the convent of Bornhofen;—and now, two by two, came the sisters of the holy shrine, and the armed men made way, as with trailing garments and veiled faces they swept along into the very lists. At that moment one from amongst them left her sisters with a slow majestic pace, and paused not till she stood right between the brother foes.

"Warbeck," she said in a hollow voice, that curdled up his dark spirit as it spoke, "is it thus thou wouldst prove thy love, and maintain thy trust over the fatherless orphan whom thy sire bequeathed to thy care? Shall I have murder on my soul?" At that question she paused, and those who heard it were struck dumb and shuddered. "The murder of one man by the hand of his own brother! Away, Warbeck! I command."

"Shall I forget thy wrongs, Leoline?" said Warbeck.

"Wrongs! they united me to God! they are forgiven, they

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

are no more. Earth has deserted me, but Heaven hath taken me to its arms;—shall I murmur at the change? And thou, Otho”—here her voice faltered—“thou, does thy conscience smite thee not?—wouldst thou atone for robbing me of hope by barring against me the future? Wretch that I should be, could I dream of mercy—could I dream of comfort, if thy brother fell by thy sword in my cause? Otho, I have pardoned thee, and blessed thee and thine. Once, perhaps, thou didst love me; remember how I loved thee—cast down thine arms.”

Otho gazed at the veiled form before him. Where had the soft Leoline learned to command? He turned to his brother; he felt all that he had inflicted upon both; and casting his sword upon the ground, he knelt at the feet of Leoline and kissed her garment with a devotion that votary never lavished on a holier saint.

The spell that lay over the warriors around was broken; there was one loud cry of congratulation and joy. “And thou, Warbeck!” said Leoline, turning to the spot where, still motionless and haughty, Warbeck stood.

“Have I ever rebelled against thy will?” said he, softly; and buried the point of his sword in the earth. “Yet, Leoline, yet,” added he, looking at his kneeling brother, “yet art thou already better avenged than by this steel!”

“Thou art! thou art!” cried Otho, smiting his breast; and slowly, and scarce noting the crowd that fell back from his path, Warbeck left the lists.

Leoline said no more; her divine errand was fulfilled. She looked long and wistfully after the stately form of the knight of Liebenstein, and then, with a slight sigh, she turned to Otho, “This is the last time we shall meet on earth. Peace be with us all!”

She then, with the same majestic and collected bearing, passed on towards the sisterhood; and as, in the same solemn procession, they glided back towards the convent, there was not a man present—no, not even the hardened Templar—who would not, like Otho, have bent his knee to Leoline.

Once more Otho plunged into the wild revelry of the age; his castle was thronged with guests, and night after

THE BROTHERS

night the lighted halls shone down thwart the tranquil Rhine. The beauty of the Greek, the wealth of Otho, the fame of the Templar, attracted all the chivalry from far and near. Never had the banks of the Rhine known so hospitable a lord as the knight of Sternfels. Yet gloom seized him in the midst of gladness, and the revel was welcome only as the escape from remorse. The voice of scandal, however, soon began to mingle with that of envy at the pomp of Otho. The fair Greek, it was said, weary of her lord, lavished her smiles on others: the young and the fair were always most acceptable at the castle; and, above all, her guilty love for the Templar scarcely affected disguise. Otho alone appeared unconscious of the rumour, and though he had begun to neglect his bride, he relaxed not in his intimacy with the Templar.

It was noon, and the Greek was sitting in her bower alone with her suspected lover; the rich perfumes of the East mingled with the fragrance of flowers, and various luxuries, unknown till then in those northern shores, gave a soft and effeminate character to the room.

"I tell thee," said the Greek, petulantly, "that he begins to suspect; that I have seen him watch thee, and mutter as he watched, and play with the hilt of his dagger. Better let us fly ere it is too late, for his vengeance would be terrible were it once aroused against us. Ah, why did I ever forsake my own sweet land for these barbarous shores! There, love is not considered eternal, nor inconstancy a crime worthy death."

"Peace, pretty one!" said the Templar, carelessly; "thou knowest not the laws of our foolish chivalry. Thinkest thou I could fly from a knight's halls like a thief in the night? Why, verily, even the red cross would not cover such dishonour. If thou fearest that thy dull lord suspects, let us part. The emperor hath sent to me from Frankfort. Ere evening I might be on my way thither."

"And I left to brave the barbarian's revenge alone? Is this thy chivalry?"

"Nay, prate not so wildly," answered the Templar. "Surely, when the object of his suspicion is gone, thy woman's art and thy Greek wiles can easily allay the jeal-

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

ous fiend. Do I not know thee, Glycera? Why, thou wouldst fool all men—save a Templar.”

“And thou, cruel, wouldst thou leave me?” said the Greek, weeping. “How shall I live without thee?”

The Templar laughed slightly. “Can such eyes ever weep without a comforter? But farewell; I must not be found with thee. To-morrow I depart for Frankfort; we shall meet again.”

As soon as the door closed on the Templar, the Greek rose, and pacing the room, said, “Selfish, selfish! how could I ever trust him? Yet I dare not brave Otho alone. Surely it was his step that disturbed us in our yesterday’s interview? Nay, I will fly. I can never want a companion.”

She clapped her hands; a young page appeared; she threw herself on her seat and wept bitterly.

The page approached, and love was mingled with his compassion.

“Why weepst thou, dearest lady?” said he; “is there aught in which Conrad’s services—services!—ah thou hast read his heart—his devotion may avail?”

Otho had wandered out the whole day alone; his vassals had observed that his brow was more gloomy than its wont, for he usually concealed whatever might prey within. Some of the most confidential of his servitors he had conferred with, and the conference had deepened the shadow of his countenance. He returned at twilight; the Greek did not honour the repast with her presence. She was unwell, and not to be disturbed. The gay Templar was the life of the board.

“Thou carriest a sad brow to-day, Sir Otho,” said he; “good faith, thou hast caught it from the air of Liebenstein.”

“I have something troubles me,” answered Otho, forcing a smile, “which I would fain impart to thy friendly bosom. The night is clear and the moon is up, let us forth alone into the garden.”

The Templar rose, and he forgot not to gird on his sword as he followed the knight.

Otho led the way to one of the most distant terraces that overhung the Rhine.

THE BROTHERS

"Sir Templar," said he, pausing, "answer me one question on thy knightly honour. Was it thy step that left my lady's bower yester-eve at vesper?"

Startled by so sudden a query, the wily Templar faltered in his reply.

The red blood mounted to Otho's brow. "Nay, lie not, sir knight; these eyes, thanks to God! have not witnessed, but these ears have heard from others of my dishonour."

As Otho spoke, the Templar's eye resting on the water, perceived a boat rowing fast over the Rhine; the distance forbade him to see more than the outline of two figures within it. "She was right," thought he; "perhaps that boat already bears her from the danger."

Drawing himself up to the full height of his tall stature, the Templar replied haughtily:

"Sir Otho of Sternfels, if thou hast deigned to question thy vassals, obtain from them only an answer. It is not to contradict such minions that the knights of the Temple pledge their word!"

"Enough," cried Otho, losing patience, and striking the Templar with his clenched hand. "Draw, traitor, draw!"

Alone in his lofty tower Warbeck watched the night deepen over the heavens, and communed mournfully with himself. "To what end," thought he, "have these strong affections, these capacities of love, this yearning after sympathy, been given me? Unloved and unknown I walk to my grave, and all the nobler mysteries of my heart are for ever to be untold."

Thus musing, he heard not the challenge of the warder on the wall, or the unbarring of the gate below, or the tread of footsteps along the winding stair; the door was thrown suddenly open, and Otho stood before him. "Come," he said, in a low voice trembling with passion; "come, I will show thee that which shall glad thine heart. Twofold is Leoline avenged."

Warbeck looked in amazement on a brother he had not met since they stood in arms each against the other's life, and he now saw that the arm that Otho extended to him dripped with blood, trickling drop by drop upon the floor.

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

"Come," said Otho, "follow me; it is my last prayer. Come, for Leoline's sake, come."

At that name Warbeck hesitated no longer; he girded on his sword, and followed his brother down the stairs and through the castle gate. The porter scarcely believed his eyes when he saw the two brothers, so long divided, go forth at that hour alone, and seemingly in friendship.

Warbeck, arrived at that epoch in the feelings when nothing stuns, followed with silent steps the rapid strides of his brother. The two castles, as you are aware, are scarce a stone's throw from each other. In a few minutes Otho paused at an open space in one of the terraces of Sternfels, on which the moon shone bright and steady. "Behold!" he said, in a ghastly voice, "behold!" and Warbeck saw on the sward the corpse of the Templar, bathed with the blood that even still poured fast and warm from his heart.

"Hark!" said Otho. "He it was who first made me waver in my vows to Leoline; he persuaded me to wed yon whited falsehood. Hark! he, who had thus wronged my real love, dishonoured me with my faithless bride, and thus—thus—thus"—as, grinding his teeth, he spurned again and again the dead body of the Templar—"thus Leoline and myself are avenged!"

"And thy wife?" said Warbeck, pityingly.

"Fled—fled with a hireling page. It is well! she was not worth the sword that was once belted on—by Leoline."

The tradition, dear Gertrude, proceeds to tell us that Otho, though often menaced by the rude justice of the day for the death of the Templar, defied and escaped the menace. On the very night of his revenge a long and delirious illness seized him; the generous Warbeck forgave, forgot all, save that he had been once consecrated by Leoline's love. He tended him through his sickness, and when he recovered, Otho was an altered man. He forswore the comrades he had once courted, the revels he had once led. The halls of Sternfels were desolate as those of Liebenstein. The only companion Otho sought was Warbeck, and Warbeck bore with him. They had no topic in common, for one subject Warbeck at least felt too deeply ever to trust himself to

THE BROTHERS

speak; yet did a strange and secret sympathy re-unite them. They had at least a common sorrow; often they were seen wandering together by the solitary banks of the river, or amidst the woods, without apparently interchanging word or sign. Otho died first, and still in the prime of youth; and Warbeck was now left companionless. In vain the imperial court wooed him to its pleasures; in vain the camp proffered him the oblivion of renown. Ah! could he tear himself from a spot where morning and night he could see afar, amidst the valley, the roof that sheltered Leoline, and on which every copse, every turf, reminded him of former days? His solitary life, his midnight vigils, strange scrolls about his chamber, obtained him by degrees the repute of cultivating the darker arts; and shunning, he became shunned by all. But still it was sweet to hear from time to time of the increasing sanctity of her in whom he had treasured up his last thoughts of earth. She it was who healed the sick; she it was who relieved the poor, and the superstition of that age brought pilgrims from afar to the altars that she served.

Many years afterwards, a band of lawless robbers, who ever and anon broke from their mountain fastnesses to pillage and to desolate the valleys of the Rhine,—who spared neither sex nor age; neither tower nor hut; nor even the houses of God Himself,—laid waste the territories round Bornhofen, and demanded treasure from the convent. The abbess, of the bold lineage of Rudesheim, refused the sacrilegious demand; the convent was stormed; its vassals resisted; the robbers, inured to slaughter, won the day; already the gates were forced, when a knight, at the head of a small but hardy troop, rushed down from the mountain side and turned the tide of the fray. Wherever his sword flashed fell a foe. Wherever his war-cry sounded was a space of dead men in the thick of the battle. The fight was won; the convent saved; the abbess and the sisterhood came forth to bless their deliverer. Laid under an aged oak, he was bleeding fast to death; his head was bare and his locks were grey, but scarcely yet with years. One only of the sisterhood recognized that majestic face; one bathed his parched lips; one held his dying hand; and in Leoline's presence passed away the faithful spirit of the last lord of Liebenstein!

THE BROTHERS

"Oh!" said Gertrude, through her tears; "surely you must have altered the facts,—surely—surely—it must have been impossible for Leoline, with a woman's heart, to have loved Otho more than Warbeck?"

"My child," said Vane, "so think women when they read a tale of love, and see the whole heart bared before them; but not so act they in real life—when they see only the surface of character, and pierce not its depths—until it is too late!"

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

BY CHARLES DICKENS

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

By CHARLES DICKENS

I ALEXANDRE MANETTE, unfortunate physician, native of Beauvais, and afterwards resident in Paris, write this melancholy paper in my doleful cell in the Bastille, during the last month of the year, 1767. I write it at stolen intervals, under every difficulty. I design to secrete it in the wall of the chimney, where I have slowly and laboriously made a place of concealment for it. Some pitying hand may find it there, when I and my sorrows are dust.

"These words are formed by the rusty iron point with which I write with difficulty in scrapings of soot and charcoal from the chimney, mixed with blood, in the last month of the tenth year of my captivity. Hope has quite departed from my breast. I know from terrible warnings I have noted in myself that my reason will not long remain unimpaired, but I solemnly declare that I am at this time in the possession of my right mind—that my memory is exact and circumstantial—and that I write the truth as I shall answer for these my last recorded words, whether they be ever read by men or not, at the Eternal Judgment-seat.

"One cloudy moonlight night in the third week of December (I think the twenty-second of the month) in the year 1757, I was walking on a retired part of the quay by the Seine for the refreshment of the frosty air, at an hour's distance from my place of residence in the Street of the School of Medicine, when a carriage came along behind me, driven very fast. As I stood aside to let that carriage pass, apprehensive that it might otherwise run me down, a head was put out at the window, and a voice called to the driver to stop.

"The carriage stopped as soon as the driver could rein in his horses, and the same voice called to me by my name. I answered. The carriage was then so far in advance of

CHARLES DICKENS

me that two gentlemen had time to open the door and alight before I came up with it. I observed that they were both wrapped in cloaks, and appeared to conceal themselves. As they stood side by side near the carriage door, I also observed that they both looked of about my own age, or rather younger, and that they were greatly alike, in stature, manner, voice, and (as far as I could see) face too.

"'You are Doctor Manette?' said one.

"'I am.'

"'Doctor Manette, formerly of Beauvais,' said the other; 'the young physician, originally an expert surgeon, who within the last year or two has made a rising reputation in Paris?'

"'Gentlemen,' I returned, 'I am that Doctor Manette of whom you speak so graciously.'

"'We have been to your residence,' said the first, 'and not being so fortunate as to find you there, and being informed that you were probably walking in this direction, we followed, in the hope of overtaking you. Will you please to enter the carriage?'

"The manner of both was imperious, and they both moved, as these words were spoken, so as to place me between themselves and the carriage door. They were armed. I was not.

"'Gentlemen,' said I, 'pardon me; but I usually inquire who does me the honour to seek my assistance, and what is the nature of the case to which I am summoned.'

"The reply to this was made by him who had spoken second. 'Doctor, your clients are people of condition. As to the nature of the case, our confidence in your skill assures us that you will ascertain it for yourself better than we can describe it. Enough. Will you please to enter the carriage?'

"I could do nothing but comply, and I entered it in silence. They both entered after me—the last springing in, after putting up the steps. The carriage turned about, and drove on at its former speed.

"I repeat this conversation exactly as it occurred. I have no doubt that it is, word for word, the same. I describe everything exactly as it took place, constraining my mind not to wander from the task. Where I make the broken

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

marks that follow here, I leave off for the time, and put my paper in its hiding-place. . . .

"The carriage left the streets behind, passed the North Barrier, and emerged upon the country road. At two-thirds of a league from the Barrier—I did not estimate the distance at that time, but afterwards when I traversed it—it struck out of the main avenue, and presently stopped at a solitary house. We all three alighted, and walked, by a damp soft footpath, in a garden where a neglected fountain had overflowed to the door of the house. It was not opened immediately, in answer to the ringing of the bell, and one of my two conductors struck the man who opened it, with his heavy riding glove, across the face.

"There was nothing in this action to attract my particular attention, for I had seen common people struck more commonly than dogs. But the other of the two, being angry likewise, struck the man in like manner with his arm; the look and bearing of the brothers were then so exactly alike that I then first perceived them to be twin brothers.

"From the time of our alighting at the outer gate (which we found locked, and which one of the brothers had opened to admit us, and had relocked), I had heard cries proceeding from an upper chamber. I was conducted to this chamber straight, the cries growing louder as we ascended the stairs, and I found a patient in a high fever of the brain, lying on a bed.

"The patient was a woman of great beauty, and young; assuredly not much past twenty. Her hair was torn and ragged, and her arms were bound to her sides with sashes and handkerchiefs. I noticed that these bonds were all portions of a gentleman's dress. On one of them, which was a fringed scarf for a dress of ceremony, I saw the armorial bearings of a Noble, and the letter E.

"I saw this within the first minute of my contemplation of the patient; for, in her restless strivings she had turned over on her face on the edge of the bed, had drawn the end of the scarf into her mouth, and was in danger of suffocation. My first act was to put out my hand to relieve her breathing; and, in moving the scarf aside, the embroidery in the corner caught my sight.

CHARLES DICKENS

"I turned her gently over, placed my hands upon her breast to calm her and keep her down, and looked into her face. Her eyes were dilated and wild, and she constantly uttered piercing shrieks, and repeated the words, 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' and then counted up to twelve, and said, 'Hush!' For an instant, and no more, she would pause to listen, and then the piercing shrieks would begin again and she would repeat the cry 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' and would count up to twelve, and say, 'Hush!' There was no variation in the order, or the manner. There was no cessation, but the regular moment's pause, in the utterance of these sounds.

"How long,' I asked, 'has this lasted?'

"To distinguish the brothers, I will call them the elder and the younger; by the elder, I mean him who exercised the most authority. It was the elder who replied, 'Since about this hour last night.'

"She has a husband, a father, and a brother?'

"A brother.'

"I do not address her brother?'

"He answered with great contempt, 'No.'

"She has some recent association with the number twelve?'

"The younger brother impatiently rejoined, 'With twelve o'clock?'

"See, gentlemen,' said I, still keeping my hands upon her breast, 'how useless I am, as you have brought me! If I had known what I was coming to see, I could have come provided. As it is, time must be lost. There are no medicines to be obtained in this lonely place.'

"The elder brother looked to the younger, who said haughtily, 'There is a case of medicines here;' and brought it from a closet, and put it on the table. * * * *

"I opened some of the bottles, smelt them, and put the stoppers to my lips. If I had wanted to use anything save narcotic medicines that were poisons in themselves, I would not have administered any of those.

"Do you doubt them?' asked the younger brother.

"You see, monsieur, I am going to use them,' I replied, and said no more.

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

"I made the patient swallow, with great difficulty, and after many efforts, the dose that I desired to give. As I intended to repeat it after a while, and as it was necessary to watch its influence, I then sat down by the side of the bed. There was a timid and suppressed woman in attendance (wife of the man down-stairs), who had retreated into a corner. The house was damp and decayed, indifferently furnished—evidently, recently occupied and temporarily used. Some thick old hangings had been nailed up before the windows, to deaden the sound of the shrieks. They continued to be uttered in their regular succession, with the cry, 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' the counting up to twelve, and 'Hush!' The frenzy was so violent, that I had not unfastened the bandages restraining the arms; but I had looked to them, to see that they were not painful. The only spark of encouragement in the case, was, that my hand upon the sufferer's breast had this much soothing influence, that for minutes at a time it tranquillised the figure. It had no effect upon the cries; no pendulum could be more regular.

"For the reason that my hand had this effect (I assume), I had sat by the side of the bed for half an hour, with the two brothers looking on, before the elder said:

"There is another patient."

"I was startled, and asked, 'Is it a pressing case?'"

"You had better see,' he carelessly answered; and took up a light. * * * *

"The other patient lay in a back room across a second staircase, which was a species of loft over a stable. There was a low plastered ceiling to a part of it; the rest was open, to the ridge of the tiled roof, and there were beams across. Hay and straw were stored in that portion of the place, fagots for firing, and a heap of apples in sand. I had to pass through that part, to get at the other. My memory is circumstantial and unshaken. I try it with these details, and I see them all, in this my cell in the Bastille, near the close of the tenth year of my captivity, as I saw them all that night.

"On some hay on the ground, with a cushion thrown under his head, lay a handsome peasant boy—a boy of not

CHARLES DICKENS

more than seventeen at the most. He lay on his back, with his teeth set, his right hand clenched on his breast, and his glaring eyes looking straight upward. I could not see where his wound was, as I kneeled on one knee over him; but, I could see that he was dying of a wound from a sharp point.

"'I am a doctor, my poor fellow,' said I. 'Let me examine it.'

"'I do not want it examined,' he answered; 'let it be.'

"It was under his hand, and I soothed him to let me move his hand away. The wound was a sword-thrust, received from twenty to twenty-four hours before, but no skill could have saved him if it had been looked to without delay. He was then dying fast. As I turned my eyes to the elder brother, I saw him looking down at this handsome boy whose life was ebbing out, as if he were a wounded bird, or hare, or rabbit; not at all as if he were a fellow-creature.

"'How has this been done, monsieur?' said I.

"'A crazed young common dog! A serf! Forced my brother to draw upon him, and has fallen by my brother's sword—like a gentleman.'

"There was no touch of pity, sorrow, or kindred humanity, in this answer. The speaker seemed to acknowledge that it was inconvenient to have that different order of creature dying there, and that it would have been better if he had died in the usual obscure routine of his vermin kind. He was quite incapable of any compassionate feeling about the boy, or about his fate.

"The boy's eyes had slowly moved to him as he had spoken, and they now slowly moved to me.

"'Doctor, they are very proud, these Nobles; but we common dogs are proud too, sometimes. They plunder us, outrage us, beat us, kill us; but we have a little pride left, sometimes. She—have you seen her, Doctor?'

"The shrieks and the cries were audible there, though subdued by the distance. He referred to them, as if she were lying in our presence.

"I said, 'I have seen her.'

"'She is my sister, Doctor. They have had their shame-

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

ful rights, these Nobles, in the modesty and virtue of our sisters, many years, but we have had good girls among us. I know it, and have heard my father say so. She was a good girl. She was betrothed to a good young man, too: a tenant of his. We were all tenants of his—that man's who stands there. The other is his brother, the worst of a bad race.'

"It was with the greatest difficulty that the boy gathered bodily force to speak; but, his spirit spoke with a dreadful emphasis.

"We were so robbed by that man who stands there, as all we common dogs are by those superior Beings—taxed by him without mercy, obliged to work for him without pay, obliged to grind our corn at his mill, obliged to feed scores of his tame birds on our wretched crops, and forbidden for our lives to keep a single tame bird of our own, pillaged and plundered to that degree that when we chanced to have a bit of meat, we ate it in fear, with the door barred and the shutters closed, that his people should not see it and take it from us—I say, we were so robbed, and hunted, and were made so poor, that our father told us it was a dreadful thing to bring a child into the world, and that what we should most pray for, was, that our women might be barren and our miserable race die out!

"I had never before seen the sense of being oppressed, bursting forth like a fire. I had supposed that it must be latent in the people somewhere; but, I had never seen it break out, until I saw it in the dying boy.

"Nevertheless, Doctor, my sister married. He was ailing at that time, poor fellow, and she married her lover, that she might tend and comfort him in our cottage—our dog-hut, as that man would call it. She had not been married many weeks, when that man's brother saw her and admired her, and asked that man to lend her to him—for what are husbands among us! He was willing enough, but my sister was good and virtuous, and hated his brother with a hatred as strong as mine. What did the two then, to persuade her husband to use his influence with her, to make her willing?"

"The boy's eyes, which had been fixed on mine, slowly

CHARLES DICKENS

turned to the looker-on, and I saw in the two faces that all he said was true. The two opposing kinds of pride confronting one another, I can see, even in this Bastille; the gentleman's, all negligent indifference; the peasant's, all trodden-down sentiment, and passionate revenge.

"You know, Doctor, that it is among the Rights of these Nobles to harness us common dogs to carts, and drive us. They so harnessed him and drove him. You know that it is among their Rights to keep us in their grounds all night, quieting the frogs, in order that their noble sleep may not be disturbed. They kept him out in the unwholesome mists at night, and ordered him back into harness in the day. But he was not persuaded. No! Taken out of harness one day at noon, to feed—if he could find food—he sobbed twelve times, once for every stroke of the bell, and died on her bosom."

"Nothing human could have held life in the boy but his determination to tell all his wrong. He forced back the gathering shadows of death, as he forced his clenched right hand to remain clenched, and to cover his wound.

"Then, with that man's permission and even with his aid, his brother took her away; in spite of what I know she must have told his brother—and what that is, will not be long unknown to you, Doctor, if it is now—his brother took her away—for his pleasure and diversion, for a little while. I saw her pass me on the road. When I took the tidings home, our father's heart burst; he never spoke one of the words that filled it. I took my young sister (for I have another) to a place beyond the reach of this man, and where, at least, she will never be his vassal. Then, I tracked the brother here, and last night climbed in—a common dog, but sword in hand.—Where is the loft window? It was somewhere here?"

"The room was darkening to his sight; the world was narrowing around him. I glanced about me, and saw that the hay and straw were trampled over the floor, as if there had been a struggle.

"She heard me, and ran in. I told her not to come near us till he was dead. He came in and first tossed me some pieces of money; then struck at me with a whip. But I,

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

though a common dog, so struck at him as to make him draw. Let him break into as many pieces as he will, the sword that he stained with my common blood; he drew to defend himself—thrust at me with all his skill for his life.'

"My glance had fallen, but a few moments before, on the fragments of a broken sword, lying among the hay. That weapon was a gentleman's. In another place, lay an old sword that seemed to have been a soldier's.

"Now, lift me up, Doctor; lift me up. Where is he?"

"He is not here,' I said, supporting the boy, and thinking that he referred to the brother.

"He! Proud as these Nobles are, he is afraid to see me. Where is the man who was here? Turn my face to him.'

"I did so, raising the boy's head against my knee. But, invested for the moment with extraordinary power, he raised himself completely: obliging me to rise too, or I could not have still supported him.

"Marquis,' said the boy, turned to him with his eyes opened wide, and his right hand raised, 'in the days when all these things are to be answered for, I summon you and yours, to the last of your bad race, to answer for them. I mark this cross of blood upon you, as a sign that I do it. In the days when all these things are to be answered for, I summon your brother, the worst of the bad race, to answer for them separately. I mark this cross of blood upon him; as a sign that I do it.'

"Twice, he put his hand to the wound in his breast, and with his forefinger drew a cross in the air. He stood for an instant with the finger yet raised, and as it dropped, he dropped with it, and I laid him down dead. * * * *

"When I returned to the bedside of the young woman, I found her raving in precisely the same order of continuity. I knew that this might last for many hours, and that it would probably end in the silence of the grave.

"I repeated the medicines I had given her, and I sat at the side of the bed until the night was far advanced. She never abated the piercing quality of her shrieks, never stumbled in the distinctness or the order of her words. They were always 'My husband, my father, and my brother! One,

CHARLES DICKENS

two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Hush!

"This lasted twenty-six hours from the time when I first saw her. I had come and gone twice, and was again sitting by her, when she began to falter. I did what little could be done to assist that opportunity, and by-and-bye she sank into a lethargy, and lay like the dead.

"It was as if the wind and rain had lulled at last, after a long and fearful storm. I released her arms, and called the woman to assist me to compose her figure and the dress she had torn. It was then that I knew her condition to be that of one in whom the first expectations of being a mother have arisen; and it was then that I lost the little hope I had had of her.

"Is she dead?" asked the Marquis, whom I will still describe as the elder brother, coming booted into the room from his horse.—"Not dead," said I; "but like to die."

"What strength there is in these common bodies!" he said, looking down at her with some curiosity.

"There is prodigious strength," I answered him, "in sorrow and despair."

"He first laughed at my words, and then frowned at them. He moved a chair with his foot near to mine, ordered the woman away, and said in a subdued voice,

"Doctor, finding my brother in this difficulty with these hinds, I recommended that your aid should be invited. Your reputation is high, and, as a young man with your fortune to make, you are probably mindful of your interest. The things that you see here, are things to be seen, and not spoken of."

"I listened to the patient's breathing, and avoided answering.—"Do you honour me with your attention, Doctor?"

"Monsieur," said I, "in my profession, the communications of patients are always received in confidence." I was guarded in my answer, for I was troubled in my mind with what I had heard and seen.

"Her breathing was so difficult to trace, that I carefully tried the pulse and the heart. There was life, and no more. Looking round as I resumed my seat, I found both the brothers intent upon me. * * * *

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

"I write with so much difficulty, the cold is so severe, I am so fearful of being detected and consigned to an underground cell and total darkness, that I must abridge this narrative. There is no confusion of failure in my memory; it can recall, and could detail, every word that was ever spoken between me and those brothers.

"She lingered for a week. Towards the last, I could understand some few syllables that she said to me, by placing my ear close to her lips. She asked me where she was, and I told her; who I was, and I told her. It was in vain that I asked her for her family name. She faintly shook her head upon the pillow, and kept her secret, as the boy had done.

"I had no opportunity of asking her any question, until I had told the brothers she was sinking fast, and could not live another day. Until then, though no one was ever presented to her consciousness save the woman and myself, one or other of them had always jealously sat behind the curtain at the head of the bed when I was there. But when it came to that, they seemed careless what communication I might hold with her; as if—the thought passed through my mind—I were dying too.

"I always observed that their pride bitterly resented the younger brother's (as I call him) having crossed swords with a peasant, and that peasant a boy. The only consideration that appeared to affect the mind of either of them was the consideration that this was highly degrading to the family, and was ridiculous. As often as I caught the younger brother's eyes, their expression reminded me that he disliked me deeply, for knowing what I knew from the boy. He was smoother and more polite to me than the elder; but I saw this. I also saw that I was an incumbrance in the mind of the elder, too.

"My patient died, two hours before midnight—at a time, by my watch, answering almost to the minute when I had first seen her. I was alone with her, when her forlorn young head drooped gently on one side, and all her earthly wrongs and sorrows ended.

"The brothers were waiting in a room down-stairs, impatient to ride away. I had heard them, alone at the bed-

CHARLES DICKENS

side, striking their boots with their riding-whips, and loitering up and down.

"At last she's dead?" said the elder, when I went in.

"She is dead," said I.

"I congratulate you, my brother," were his words as he turned round.

"He had before offered me money, which I had postponed taking. He now gave me a rouleau of gold. I took it from his hand, but laid it on the table. I had considered the question, and had resolved to accept nothing.

"Pray excuse me," said I. "Under the circumstances, no."

"They exchanged looks, but bent their heads to me as I bent mine to them, and we parted without another word on either side. * * * *

"I am weary, weary, weary—worn down by misery. I cannot read what I have written with this gaunt hand.

"Early in the morning, the rouleau of gold was left at my door in a little box, with my name on the outside. From the first, I had anxiously considered what I ought to do. I decided, that day, to write privately to the Minister, stating the nature of the two cases to which I had been summoned, and the place to which I had gone: in effect, stating all the circumstances. I knew what Court influence was, and what the immunities of the Nobles were, and I expected that the matter would never be heard of; but, I wished to relieve my own mind. I had kept the matter a profound secret even from my wife; and this, too, I resolved to state in my letter. I had no apprehension whatever of my real danger; but I was conscious that there might be danger for others, if others were compromised by possessing the knowledge that I possessed.

"I was much engaged that day, and could not complete my letter that night. I rose long before my usual time next morning to finish it. It was the last day of the year. The letter was lying before me just completed when I was told that a lady waited, who wished to see me. * * * *

"I am growing more and more unequal to the task I have set myself. It is so cold, so dark, my senses are so benumbed, and the gloom upon me is so dreadful.

"The lady was young, engaging, and handsome, but not

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

marked for long life. She was in great agitation. She presented herself to me as the wife of the Marquis St. Evrémonde. I connected the title by which the boy had addressed the elder brother, with the initial letter embroidered on the scarf, and had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that I had seen that nobleman very lately.

"My memory is still accurate, but I cannot write the words of our conversation. I suspect that I am watched more closely than I was, and I know not at what times I may be watched. She had in part suspected, and in part discovered, the main facts of the cruel story, of her husband's share in it, and my being resorted to. She did not know that the girl was dead. Her hope had been, she said in great distress, to show her, in secret, a woman's sympathy. Her hope had been to avert the wrath of Heaven from a House that had long been hateful to the suffering many. She had reasons for believing that there was a young sister living, and her greatest desire was, to help that sister. I could tell her nothing but that there was such a sister; beyond that, I knew nothing. Her inducement to come to me, relying on my confidence, had been the hope that I could tell her the name and place of abode. Whereas, to this wretched hour I am ignorant of both. * * * *

"These scraps of paper fail me. One was taken from me, with a warning, yesterday. I must finish my record to-day. She was a good, compassionate lady, and not happy in her marriage. How could she be! The brother distrusted and disliked her, and his influence was all opposed to her; she stood in dread of him, and in dread of her husband too. When I handed her down to the door, there was a child, a pretty boy from two to three years old, in her carriage.

"'For his sake, Doctor,' she said, pointing to him in tears, 'I would do all I can to make what poor amends I can. He will never prosper in his inheritance otherwise. I have a presentiment that if no other innocent atonement is made for this, it will one day be required of him. What I have left to call my own—it is little beyond the worth of a few jewels—I will make it the first charge of his life to bestow, with the compassion and lamenting of his dead mother, on this injured family, if the sister can be discov-

"DR. MANETTE'S MANUSCRIPT"

ered.' She kissed the boy, and said, caressing him, 'It is for thine own dear sake. Thou wilt be faithful, little Charles?' The child answered her bravely, 'Yes!' I kissed her hand, and she took him in her arms, and went away caressing him. I never saw her more. As she had mentioned her husband's name in the faith that I knew it, I added no mention of it to my letter. I sealed my letter, and, not trusting it out of my own hands, delivered it myself that day.

"That night, the last night of the year, towards nine o'clock, a man in a black dress rang at my gate, demanded to see me, and softly followed my servant, Ernest Defarge, a youth, up-stairs. When my servant came into the room where I sat with my wife—O my wife, beloved of my heart! My fair young English wife!—we saw the man, who was supposed to be at the gate, standing silent behind him.

"'An urgent case in the Rue St. Honoré,' he said. It would not detain me, he had a coach in waiting.

"It brought me here, it brought me to my grave. When I was clear of the house, a black muffler was drawn tightly over my mouth from behind, and my arms were pinioned. The two brothers crossed the road from a dark corner, and identified me with a single gesture. The Marquis took from his pocket the letter I had written, showed it me, burnt it in the light of a lantern that was held, and extinguished the ashes with his foot. Not a word was spoken. I was brought here, I was brought to my living grave.

"If it had pleased God to put it in the hard heart of either of the brothers, in all these frightful years, to grant me any tidings of my dearest wife—so much as to let me know by a word whether alive or dead—I might have thought that He had not quite abandoned them. But, now I believe that the mark of the red cross is fatal to them, and that they have no part in His mercies. And them and their descendants, to the last of their race, I, Alexandre Manette, unhappy prisoner, do this last night of the year 1767, in my unbearable agony, denounce to the times when all these things shall be answered for. I denounce them to Heaven and to earth."

THE CALDRON OF OIL
BY WILKIE COLLINS

THE CALDRON OF OIL

By WILKIE COLLINS

ABOUT one French league distant from the city of Toulouse there is a village called Croix-Daurade. In the military history of England, this place is associated with a famous charge of the Eighteenth Hussars, which united two separated columns of the British army on the day before the Duke of Wellington fought the battle of Toulouse. In the criminal history of France, the village is memorable as the scene of a daring crime, which was discovered and punished under circumstances sufficiently remarkable to merit preservation in the form of a plain narrative.

I. THE PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

In the year seventeen hundred, the resident priest of the village of Croix-Daurade was Monsieur Pierre-Célestin Chaubard. He was a man of no extraordinary energy or capacity, simple in his habits, and sociable in his disposition. His character was irreproachable; he was strictly conscientious in the performance of his duties; and he was universally respected and beloved by all his parishioners.

Among the members of his flock there was a family named Siadoux. The head of the household, Saturnin Siadoux, had been long established in business at Croix-Daurade as an oil manufacturer. At the period of the events now to be narrated, he had attained the age of sixty, and was a widower. His family consisted of five children—three young men, who helped him in the business, and two daughters. His nearest living relative was his sister, the widow Mirailhe.

The widow resided principally at Toulouse. Her time in that city was mainly occupied in winding up the business affairs of her deceased husband, which had remained unsettled for a considerable period after his death, through delays in realizing certain sums of money owing to his representa-

WILKIE COLLINS

tive. The widow had been left very well provided for—she was still a comely, attractive woman—and more than one substantial citizen of Toulouse had shown himself anxious to persuade her into marrying for the second time. But the widow Mirailhe lived on terms of great intimacy and affection with her brother Siadoux and his family; she was sincerely attached to them, and sincerely unwilling, at her age, to deprive her nephews and nieces, by a second marriage, of the inheritance, or even of a portion of the inheritance, which would otherwise fall to them on her death. Animated by these motives, she closed her doors resolutely on all suitors who attempted to pay their court to her, with the one exception of a master-butcher of Toulouse, whose name was Cantegrel.

This man was a neighbour of the widow's and had made himself useful by assisting her in the business complications which still hung about the realization of her late husband's estate. The preference which she showed for the master-butcher was thus far of the purely negative kind. She gave him no absolute encouragement; she would not for a moment admit that there was the slightest prospect of her ever marrying him; but, at the same time, she continued to receive his visits, and she showed no disposition to restrict the neighborly intercourse between them, for the future, within purely formal bounds. Under these circumstances, Saturnin Siadoux began to be alarmed, and to think it time to bestir himself. He had no personal acquaintance with Cantegrel, who never visited the village; and Monsieur Chaubard to whom he might otherwise have applied for advice) was not in a position to give an opinion; the priest and the master-butcher did not even know each other by sight. In this difficulty, Siadoux bethought himself of inquiring privately at Toulouse, in the hope of discovering some scandalous passages in Cantegrel's early life which might fatally degrade him in the estimation of the widow Mirailhe. The investigation, as usual in such cases, produced rumors and reports in plenty, the greater part of which dated back to a period of the butcher's life when he had resided in the ancient town of Narbonne. One of these rumors, especially, was of so serious a nature that Siadoux determined to test the truth or

THE CALDRON OF OIL

falsehood of it personally by traveling to Narbonne. He kept his intention a secret not only from his sister and his daughters, but also from his sons; they were young men, not overpatient in their tempers, and he doubted their discretion. Thus, nobody knew his real purpose but himself when he left home.

His safe arrival at Narbonne was notified in a letter to his family. The letter entered into no particulars relating to his secret errand: it merely informed his children of the day when they might expect him back, and of certain social arrangements which he wished to be made to welcome him on his return. He proposed, on his way home, to stay two days at Castelnaudry, for the purpose of paying a visit to an old friend who was settled there. According to this plan, his return to Croix-Daurad would be deferred until Tuesday, the twenty-sixth of April, when his family might expect to see him about sunset, in good time for supper. He further desired that a little party of friends might be invited to the meal, to celebrate the twenty-sixth of April (which was a feast-day in the village), as well as to celebrate his return. The guests whom he wished to be invited were, first, his sister; secondly, Monsieur Chaubard, whose pleasant disposition made him a welcome guest at all the village festivals; thirdly and fourthly, two neighbors, business men like himself, with whom he lived on terms of the friendliest intimacy. That was the party; and the family of Siadoux took especial pains, as the time approached, to provide a supper worthy of the guests, who had all shown the heartiest readiness in accepting their invitations.

This was the domestic position, these were the family prospects, on the morning of the twenty-sixth of April—a memorable day, for years afterward, in the village of Croix-Daurade.

II. THE EVENTS OF THE DAY

Besides the curacy of the village church, good Monsieur Chaubard held some ecclesiastical preferment in the cathedral church of St. Stephen at Toulouse. Early in the forenoon of the twenty-sixth, certain matters connected with

WILKIE COLLINS

this preferment took him from his village curacy to the city—a distance which has been already described as not greater than one French league, or between two and three English miles.

After transacting his business, Monsieur Chaubard parted with his clerical brethren, who left him by himself in the sacristy (or vestry) of the church. Before he had quitted the room, in his turn, the beadle entered it, and inquired for the Abbé de Mariotte, one of the officiating priests attached to the cathedral.

"The Abbé has just gone out," replied Monsieur Chaubard. "Who wants him?"

"A respectable-looking man," said the beadle. "I thought he seemed to be in some distress of mind when he spoke to me."

"Did he mention his business with the Abbé?"

"Yes, sir; he expressed himself as anxious to make his confession immediately."

"In that case," said Monsieur Chaubard, "I may be of use to him in the Abbé's absence, for I have authority to act here as confessor. Let us go into the church and see if this person feels disposed to accept my services."

When they went into the church, they found the man walking backward and forward in a restless, disordered manner. His looks were so strikingly suggestive of some serious mental perturbation, that Monsieur Chaubard found it no easy matter to preserve his composure when he first addressed himself to the stranger.

"I am sorry," he began, "that the Abbé de Mariotte is not here to offer you his services—"

"I want to make my confession," said the man, looking about him vacantly, as if the priest's words had not attracted his attention.

"You can do so at once, if you please," said Monsieur Chaubard. "I am attached to this church, and I possess the necessary authority to receive confessions in it. Perhaps, however, you are personally acquainted with the Abbé de Mariotte? Perhaps you would prefer waiting—"

"No!" said the man, roughly. "I would as soon, or sooner, confess to a stranger."

THE CALDRON OF OIL

"In that case," replied Monsieur Chaubard, "be so good as to follow me."

He led the way to the confessional. The beadle, whose curiosity was excited, waited a little, and looked after them. In a few minutes he saw the curtains, which were sometimes used to conceal the face of the officiating priest, suddenly drawn. The penitent knelt with his back turned to the church. There was literally nothing to see; but the beadle waited, nevertheless, in expectation of the end.

After a long lapse of time the curtain was withdrawn, and priest and penitent left the confessional.

The change which the interval had worked in Monsieur Chaubard was so extraordinary, that the beadle's attention was altogether withdrawn, in the interest of observing it, from the man who had made the confession. He did not remark by which door the stranger left the church—his eyes were fixed on Monsieur Chaubard. The priest's naturally ruddy face was as white as if he had just risen from a long sickness; he looked straight before him, with a stare of terror, and he left the church as hurriedly as if he had been a man escaping from prison; left it without a parting word, or a farewell look, although he was noted for his courtesy to his inferiors on all ordinary occasions.

"Good Monsieur Chaubard has heard more than he bargained for," said the beadle, wandering back to the empty confessional with an interest which he had never felt in it till that moment.

The day wore on as quietly as usual in the village of Croix-Daurade. At the appointed time the supper-table was laid for the guests in the house of Saturnin Siadoux. The widow Mirailhe and the two neighbors arrived a little before sunset. Monsieur Chaubard, who was usually punctual, did not make his appearance with them; and when the daughters of Saturnin Siadoux looked out from the upper windows, they saw no signs on the high-road of their father's return.

Sunset came, and still neither Siadoux nor the priest appeared. The little party sat waiting round the table, and waited in vain. Before long a message was sent up from

WILKIE COLLINS

the kitchen, representing that the supper must be eaten forthwith, or be spoiled; and the company began to debate the two alternatives—of waiting, or not waiting, any longer.

"It is my belief," said the widow Mirailhe, "that my brother is not coming home to-night. When Monsieur Chaubard joins us, we had better sit down to supper."

"Can any accident have happened to my father?" asked one of the two daughters, anxiously.

"God forbid!" said the widow.

"God forbid!" repeated the two neighbors, looking expectantly at the empty supper-table.

"It has been a wretched day for traveling," said Louis, the eldest son.

"It rained in torrents all yesterday," added Thomas, the second son.

"And your father's rheumatism makes him averse to traveling in wet weather," suggested the widow, thoughtfully.

"Very true!" said the first of the two neighbors, shaking his head piteously at his passive knife and fork.

Another message came up from the kitchen, and peremptorily forbade the company to wait any longer.

"But where is Monsieur Chaubard?" said the widow. "Has he been taking a journey too? Why is he absent? Has any body seen him to-day?"

"I have seen him to-day," said the youngest son, who had not spoken yet. This young man's name was Jean; he was little given to talking, but he had proved himself, on various domestic occasions, to be the quickest and most observant member of the family.

"Where did you see him?" asked the widow.

"I met him this morning, on his way into Toulouse."

"He has not fallen ill, I hope? Did he look out of sorts when you met him?"

"He was in excellent health and spirits," said Jean. "I never saw him look better—"

"And I never saw him look worse," said the second of the neighbors, striking into the conversation with the aggressive fretfulness of a hungry man.

"What! this morning?" cried Jean, in astonishment.

"No; this afternoon," said the neighbor. "I saw him

THE CALDRON OF OIL

going into our church here. He was as white as our plates will be—when they come up. And what is almost as extraordinary, he passed without taking the slightest notice of me."

Jean relapsed into his customary silence. It was getting dark; the clouds had gathered while the company had been talking; and, at the first pause in the conversation, the rain, falling again in torrents, made itself drearily audible.

"Dear, dear me!" said the widow. "If it was not raining so hard, we might send somebody to inquire after good Monsieur Chaubard."

"I'll go and inquire," said Thomas Siadoux. "It's not five minutes' walk. Have up the supper; I'll take a cloak with me; and if our excellent Monsieur Chaubard is out of his bed, I'll bring him back, to answer for himself."

With those words he left the room. The supper was put on the table forthwith. The hungry neighbor disputed with nobody from that moment, and the melancholy neighbor recovered his spirits.

On reaching the priest's house, Thomas Siadoux found him sitting alone in his study. He started to his feet, with every appearance of the most violent alarm, when the young man entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Thomas; "I am afraid I have startled you."

"What do you want?" asked Monsieur Chaubard, in a singularly abrupt, bewildered manner.

"Have you forgotten, sir, that this is the night of our supper?" remonstrated Thomas. "My father has not come back, and we can only suppose—"

At those words the priest dropped into his chair again, and trembled from head to foot. Amazed to the last degree by this extraordinary reception of his remonstrance, Thomas Siadoux remembered, at the same time, that he had engaged to bring Monsieur Chaubard back with him; and he determined to finish his civil speech as if nothing had happened.

"We are all of opinion," he resumed, "that the weather has kept my father on the road. But that is no reason, sir, why the supper should be wasted, or why you should not

WILKIE COLLINS

make one of us, as you promised. Here is a good warm cloak—”

“I can’t come,” said the priest. “I’m ill; I’m in bad spirits; I’m not fit to go out.” He sighed bitterly, and hid his face in his hands.

“Don’t say that, sir,” persisted Thomas. “If you are out of spirits, let us try to cheer you. And you, in your turn, will enliven us. They are all waiting for you at home. Don’t refuse, sir,” pleaded the young man, “or we shall think we have offended you in some way. You have always been a good friend to our family—”

Monsieur Chaubard again rose from his chair, with a second change of manner, as extraordinary and as perplexing as the first. His eyes moistened as if the tears were rising in them; he took the hand of Thomas Siadoux, and pressed it long and warmly in his own. There was a curious mixed expression of pity and fear in the look which he now fixed on the young man.

“Of all the days in the year,” he said, very earnestly, “don’t doubt my friendship to-day. Ill as I am, I will make one of the supper party, for your sake—”

“And for my father’s sake?” added Thomas, persuasively.

“Let us go to the supper,” said the priest.

Thomas Siadoux wrapped the cloak round him, and they left the house.

Every one at the table noticed the change in Monsieur Chaubard. He accounted for it by declaring, confusedly, that he was suffering from nervous illness; and then added that he would do his best, notwithstanding, to promote the social enjoyment of the evening. His talk was fragmentary, and his cheerfulness was sadly forced; but he contrived, with these drawbacks, to take his part in the conversation—except in the case when it happened to turn on the absent master of the house. Whenever the name of Saturnin Siadoux was mentioned—either by the neighbors, who politely regretted that he was not present, or by the family, who naturally talked about the resting-place which he might have chosen for the night—Monsieur Chaubard either relapsed into blank silence, or abruptly changed the topic. Under these circumstances, the company, by whom he was respected

THE CALDRON OF OIL

and beloved, made the necessary allowances for his state of health; the only person among them who showed no desire to cheer the priest's spirits, and to humor him in his temporary fretfulness, being the silent younger son of Saturnin Siadoux.

Both Louis and Thomas noticed that, from the moment when Monsieur Chaubard's manner first betrayed his singular unwillingness to touch on the subject of their father's absence, Jean fixed his eyes on the priest with an expression of suspicious attention, and never looked away from him for the rest of the evening. The young man's absolute silence at table did not surprise his brothers, for they were accustomed to his taciturn habits. But the sullen distrust betrayed in his close observation of the honored guest and friend of the family surprised and angered them. The priest himself seemed once or twice to be aware of the scrutiny to which he was subjected, and to feel uneasy and offended, as he naturally might. He abstained, however, from openly noticing Jean's strange behavior; and Louis and Thomas were bound, therefore, in common politeness, to abstain from noticing it also.

The inhabitants of Croix-Daurade kept early hours. Toward eleven o'clock, the company rose and separated for the night. Except the two neighbors, nobody had enjoyed the supper, and even the two neighbors, having eaten their fill, were as glad to get home as the rest. In the little confusion of parting, Monsieur Chaubard completed the astonishment of the guests at the extraordinary change in him, by slipping away alone, without waiting to bid any body good-night.

The widow Mirailhe and her nieces withdrew to their bedrooms, and left the three brothers by themselves in the parlor.

"Jean," said Thomas Siadoux, "I have a word to say to you. You stared at our good Monsieur Chaubard in a very offensive manner all through the evening. What did you mean by it?"

"Wait till to-morrow," said Jean, "and perhaps I may tell you."

He lit his candle, and left them. Both the brothers ob-

WILKIE COLLINS

served that his hand trembled, and that his manner—never very winning—was on that night more serious and more unsociable than usual.

III. THE YOUNGER BROTHER

When post-time came on the morning of the twenty-seventh, no letter arrived from Saturnin Siadoux. On consideration, the family interpreted this circumstance in a favorable light. If the master of the house had not written to them, it followed, surely, that he meant to make writing unnecessary by returning on that day.

As the hours passed, the widow and her nieces looked out, from time to time, for the absent man. Toward noon they observed a little assembly of people approaching the village. Ere long, on a nearer view, they recognized at the head of the assembly the chief magistrate of Toulouse, in his official dress. He was accompanied by his assessor (also in official dress), by an escort of archers, and by certain subordinates attached to the town-hall. These last appeared to be carrying some burden, which was hidden from view by the escort of archers. The procession stopped at the house of Saturnin Siadoux; and the two daughters, hastening to the door to discover what had happened, met the burden which the men were carrying, and saw, stretched on a litter, the dead body of their father.

The corpse had been found that morning on the banks of the river Lers. It was stabbed in eleven places with knife or dagger wounds. None of the valuables about the dead man's person had been touched; his watch and his money were still in his pockets. Whoever had murdered him, had murdered him for vengeance, not for gain.

Some time elapsed before even the male members of the family were sufficiently composed to hear what the officers of justice had to say to them. When this result had been at length achieved, and when the necessary inquiries had been made, no information of any kind was obtained which pointed to the murderer, in the eye of the law. After expressing his sympathy, and promising that every available means should be tried to effect the discovery of the criminal,

THE CALDRON OF OIL

the chief magistrate gave his orders to his escort, and withdrew.

When night came, the sister and the daughters of the murdered man retired to the upper part of the house, exhausted by the violence of their grief. The three brothers were left once more alone in the parlor, to speak together of the awful calamity which had befallen them. They were of hot Southern blood, and they looked on one another with a Southern thirst for vengeance in their tearless eyes.

The silent younger son was now the first to open his lips.

"You charged me yesterday," he said to his brother Thomas, "with looking strangely at Monsieur Chaubard all the evening; and I answered, that I might tell you why I looked at him when to-morrow came. To-morrow has come, and I am ready to tell you."

He waited a little, and lowered his voice to a whisper when he spoke again.

"When Monsieur Chaubard was at our supper-table last night," he said, "I had it in my mind that something had happened to our father, and that the priest knew it."

The two elder brothers looked at him in speechless astonishment.

"Our father has been brought back to us a murdered man!" Jean went on, still in a whisper. "I tell you, Louis—and you, Thomas—that the priest knows who murdered him."

Louis and Thomas shrank from their younger brother as if he had spoken blasphemy.

"Listen," said Jean. "No clue has been found to the secret of the murder. The magistrate has promised us to do his best; but I saw in his face that he had little hope. We must make the discovery ourselves, or our father's blood will have cried to us for vengeance, and cried in vain. Remember that, and mark my next words. You heard me say yesterday evening that I had met Monsieur Chaubard on his way to Toulouse, in excellent health and spirits. You heard our old friend and neighbor contradict me at the supper-table, and declare that he had seen the priest, some hours later, go into our church here with the face of a panic-stricken man. You saw, Thomas, how he behaved when you

WILKIE COLLINS

went to fetch him to our house. You saw, Louis, what his looks were like when he came in. The change was noticed by every body—what was the cause of it? I saw the cause in the priest's own face when our father's name turned up in the talk round the supper-table. Did Monsieur Chaubard join in that talk? He was the only person present who never joined in it once. Did he change it on a sudden whenever it came his way? It came his way four times; and four times he changed it—trembling, stammering, turning whiter and whiter, but still, as true as the heaven above us, shifting the talk off himself every time! Are you men? Have you brains in your heads? Don't you see, as I see, what this leads to? On my salvation I swear it—the priest knows the hand that killed our father!”

The faces of the two elder brothers darkened vindictively, as the conviction of the truth fastened itself on their minds.

“How could he know it?” they inquired, eagerly.

“He must tell us himself,” said Jean.

“And if he hesitates—if he refuses to open his lips?”

“We must open them by main force.”

They drew their chairs together after that last answer, and consulted for some time in whispers.

When the consultation was over, the brothers rose and went into the room where the dead body of their father was laid out. The three kissed him, in turn, on the forehead—then took hands together, and looked meaningly in each other's faces—then separated. Louis and Thomas put on their hats, and went at once to the priest's residence; while Jean withdrew by himself to the great room at the back of the house, which was used for the purposes of the oil factory.

Only one of the workmen was left in the place. He was watching an immense caldron of boiling linseed-oil.

“You can go home,” said Jean, patting the man kindly on the shoulder. “There is no hope of a night's rest for me, after the affliction that has befallen us; I will take your place at the caldron. Go home, my good fellow—go home.”

The man thanked him, and withdrew. Jean followed, and satisfied himself that the workman had really left the house. He then returned, and sat down by the boiling caldron.

Meanwhile Louis and Thomas presented themselves at

THE CALDRON OF OIL

the priest's house. He had not yet retired to bed, and he received them kindly, but with the same extraordinary agitation in his face and manner which had surprised all who saw him on the previous day. The brothers were prepared beforehand with an answer when he inquired what they wanted of him. They replied immediately that the shock of their father's horrible death had so seriously affected their aunt and their eldest sister, that it was feared the minds of both might give way, unless spiritual consolation and assistance were afforded to them that night. The unhappy priest—always faithful and self-sacrificing where the duties of his ministry were in question—at once rose to accompany the young men back to the house. He even put on his surplice, and took the crucifix with him, to impress his words of comfort all the more solemnly on the afflicted women whom he was called on to succor.

Thus innocent of all suspicion of the conspiracy to which he had fallen a victim, he was taken into the room where Jean sat waiting by the caldron of oil, and the door was locked behind him.

Before he could speak, Thomas Siadoux openly avowed the truth.

"It is we three who want you," he said; "not our aunt, and not our sister. If you answer our questions truly, you have nothing to fear. If you refuse—" He stopped, and looked toward Jean and the boiling caldron.

Never, at the best of times, a resolute man; deprived, since the day before, of such resources of energy as he possessed, by the mental suffering which he had undergone in secret, the unfortunate priest trembled from head to foot as the three brothers closed round him. Louis took the crucifix from him, and held it; Thomas forced him to place his right hand on it; Jean stood in front of him and put the questions.

"Our father has been brought home a murdered man," he said. "Do you know who killed him?"

The priest hesitated, and the two elder brothers moved him nearer to the caldron.

"Answer us, on peril of your life," said Jean. "Say, with your hand on the blessed crucifix, do you know the man who killed our father?"

WILKIE COLLINS

"I do know him."

"When did you make the discovery?"

"Yesterday."

"Where?"

"At Toulouse."

"Name the murderer."

At those words the priest closed his hand fast on the crucifix, and rallied his sinking courage.

"Never!" he said, firmly. "The knowledge I possess was obtained in the confessional. The secrets of the confessional are sacred. If I betray them, I commit sacrilege. I will die first!"

"Think!" said Jean. "If you keep silence, you screen the murderer. If you keep silence, you are the murderer's accomplice. We have sworn over our father's dead body to avenge him; if you refuse to speak, we will avenge him on you. I charge you again, name the man who killed him."

"I will die first," the priest reiterated, as firmly as before.

"Die, then!" said Jean. "Die in that caldron of boiling oil."

"Give him time," cried Louis and Thomas, earnestly pleading together.

"We will give him time," said the younger brother.

There is the clock yonder, against the wall. We will count five minutes by it. In those five minutes, let him make his peace with God, or make up his mind to speak."

They waited, watching the clock. In that dreadful interval, the priest dropped on his knees and hid his face. The time passed in dead silence.

"Speak! for your own sake, for our sakes, speak!" said Thomas Siadoux, as the minute-hand reached the point at which the five minutes expired.

The priest looked up; his voice died away on his lips; the mortal agony broke out on his face in great drops of sweat; his head sank forward on his breast.

"Lift him!" cried Jean, seizing the priest on one side. "Lift him, and throw him in!"

The two elder brothers advanced a step, and hesitated.

"Lift him, on your oath over our father's body!"

The two brothers seized him on the other side. As they

THE CALDRON OF OIL

lifted him to a level with the caldron, the horror of the death that threatened him burst from the lips of the miserable man in a scream of terror. The brothers held him firm at the caldron's edge. "Name the man!" they said for the last time.

The priest's teeth chattered—he was speechless. But he made a sign with his head—a sign in the affirmative. They placed him in a chair, and waited patiently until he was able to speak.

His first words were words of entreaty. He begged Thomas Siadoux to give him back the crucifix. When it was placed in his possession, he kissed it, and said, faintly, "I ask pardon of God for the sin that I am about to commit." He paused, and then looked up at the younger brother, who still stood in front of him. "I am ready," he said. "Question me, and I will answer."

Jean repeated the questions which he had put when the priest was first brought into the room.

"You know the murderer of our father?"

"I know him."

"Since when?"

"Since he made his confession to me yesterday in the Cathedral of Toulouse."

"Name him."

"His name is Cantegrel."

"The man who wanted to marry our aunt?"

"The same."

"What brought him to the confessional?"

"His own remorse."

"What were the motives for his crime?"

"There were reports against his character, and he discovered that your father had gone privately to Narbonne to make sure they were true."

"Did our father make sure of their truth?"

"He did."

"Would those discoveries have separated our aunt from Cantegrel if our father had lived to tell her of them?"

"They would. If your father had lived, he would have told your aunt that Cantegrel was married already; that he had deserted his wife at Narbonne; that she was living there

WILKIE COLLINS

with another man, under another name; and that she had herself confessed it in your father's presence."

"Where was the murder committed?"

"Between Villefranche and this village. Cantegrel had followed your father to Narbonne, and had followed him back again to Villefranche. As far as that place, he traveled in company with others, both going and returning. Beyond Villefranche, he was left alone at the ford over the river. There Cantegrel drew the knife to kill him before he reached home and told his news to your aunt."

"How was the murder committed?"

"It was committed while your father was watering his pony by the bank of the stream. Cantegrel stole on him from behind, and struck him as he was stooping over the saddle-bow."

"This is the truth, on your oath?"

"On my oath, it is the truth."

"You may leave us."

The priest rose from his chair without assistance. From the time when the terror of death had forced him to reveal the murderer's name a great change had passed over him. He had given his answers with the immovable calmness of a man on whose mind all human interests had lost their hold. He now left the room, strangely absorbed in himself; moving with the mechanical regularity of a sleep-walker; lost to all perception of things and persons about him. At the door he stopped—woke, as it seemed, from the trance that possessed him—and looked at the three brothers with a steady, changeless sorrow, which they had never seen in him before, which they never afterward forgot.

"I forgive you," he said, quietly and solemnly. "Pray for me when my time comes."

With those last words, he left them.

IV. THE END

The night was far advanced; but the three brothers determined to set forth instantly for Toulouse, and to place their information in the magistrate's hands before the morning dawned.

THE CALDRON OF OIL

Thus far no suspicion had occurred to them of the terrible consequences which were to follow their night-interview with the priest. They were absolutely ignorant of the punishment to which a man in holy orders exposed himself, if he revealed the secrets of the confessional. No infliction of that punishment had been known in their neighborhood; for at that time, as at this, the rarest of all priestly offenses was a violation of the sacred trust confided to the confessor by the Roman Church. Conscious that they had forced the priest into the commission of a clerical offense, the brothers sincerely believed that the loss of his curacy would be the heaviest penalty which the law could exact from him. They entered Toulouse that night, discussing the atonement which they might offer to Monsieur Chaubard, and the means which they might best employ to make his future easy to him.

The first disclosure of the consequences which would certainly follow the outrage they had committed, was revealed to them when they made their deposition before the officer of justice. The magistrate listened to their narrative with horror vividly expressed in his face and manner.

"Better you had never been born," he said, "than have avenged your father's death as you three have avenged it. Your own act has doomed the guilty and the innocent to suffer alike."

Those words proved prophetic of the truth. The end came quickly, as the priest had foreseen it, when he spoke his parting words.

The arrest of Cantegrel was accomplished without difficulty the next morning. In the absence of any other evidence on which to justify this proceeding, the private disclosure to the authorities of the secret which the priest had violated became inevitable. The Parliament of Languedoc was, under these circumstances, the tribunal appealed to; and the decision of that assembly immediately ordered the priest and the three brothers to be placed in confinement, as well as the murderer Cantegrel. Evidence was then immediately sought for, which might convict this last criminal without any reference to the revelation that had been forced from the priest—and evidence enough was found to satisfy judges whose minds already possessed the foregone cer-

WILKIE COLLINS

tainy of the prisoner's guilt. He was put on his trial, was convicted of the murder, and was condemned to be broken on the wheel. The sentence was rigidly executed, with as little delay as the law would permit.

The cases of Monsieur Chaubard, and of the three sons of Siadoux, next occupied the judges. The three brothers were found guilty of having forced the secret of a confession from a man in holy orders, and were sentenced to death by hanging. A far more terrible expiation of his offense awaited the unfortunate priest. He was condemned to have his limbs broken on the wheel, and to be afterward, while still living, bound to the stake and destroyed by fire.

Barbarous as the punishments of that period were, accustomed as the population was to hear of their infliction, and even to witness it, the sentences pronounced in these two cases dismayed the public mind; and the authorities were surprised by receiving petitions for mercy from Toulouse, and from all the surrounding neighborhood. But the priest's doom had been sealed. All that could be obtained, by the intercession of persons of the highest distinction, was, that the executioner should grant him the mercy of death before his body was committed to the flames. With this one modification, the sentence was executed, as the sentence had been pronounced, on the curate of Croix-Daurade.

The punishment of the three sons of Siadoux remained to be inflicted. But the people, roused by the death of the ill-fated priest, rose against this third execution with a resolution before which the local government gave way. The cause of the young men was taken up by the hot-blooded populace, as the cause of all fathers and all sons; their filial piety was exalted to the skies; their youth was pleaded in their behalf; their ignorance of the terrible responsibility which they had confronted in forcing the secret from the priest was loudly alleged in their favor. More than this, the authorities were actually warned that the appearance of the prisoners on the scaffold would be the signal for an organized revolt and rescue. Under this serious pressure, the execution was deferred, and the prisoners were kept in confinement until the popular ferment had subsided.

The delay not only saved their lives, it gave them back

THE CALDRON OF OIL

their liberty as well. The infection of the popular sympathy had penetrated through the prison doors. All three brothers were handsome, well-grown young men. The gentlest of the three in disposition—Thomas Siadoux—aroused the interest and won the affection of the head-jailer's daughter. Her father was prevailed on at her intercession to relax a little in his customary vigilance; and the rest was accomplished by the girl herself. One morning, the population of Toulouse heard, with every testimony of the most extravagant rejoicing, that the three brothers had escaped, accompanied by the jailer's daughter. As a necessary legal formality, they were pursued, but no extraordinary efforts were used to overtake them; and they succeeded, accordingly, in crossing the nearest frontier.

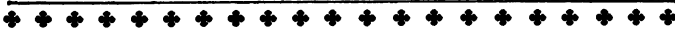
Twenty days later, orders were received from the capital to execute their sentence in effigy. They were then permitted to return to France, on condition that they never again appeared in their native place, or in any other part of the province of Languedoc. With this reservation they were left free to live where they pleased, and to repent the fatal act which had avenged them on the murderer of their father at the cost of the priest's life.

Beyond this point the official documents do not enable us to follow their career. All that is now known has been now told of the village tragedy at Croix-Daurade.



THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE
BY SAMUEL LOVER





THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

By SAMUEL LOVER

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover

—*Shakespeare*

IT was a fine morning in the autumn of 1832, and the sun had not yet robbed the grass of its dew, as a stout-built peasant was moving briskly along a small by-road in the county of Tipperary. The elasticity of his step bespoke the lightness of his heart, and the rapidity of his walk did not seem sufficient, even, for the exuberance of his glee, for every now and then the walk was exchanged for a sort of dancing shuffle, which terminated with a short capering kick that threw up the dust about him, and all the while he whistled one of those whimsical jig tunes with which Ireland abounds, and twirled his stick over his head in a triumphal flourish. Then off he started again in his original pace, and hummed a rollicking song, and occasionally broke out into soliloquy—"Why then, an' isn't it the grate day intirely for Ireland, that is in it this blessed day. Whoo! your sowl to glory but we'll do the job complete"—and here he cut a caper.—"Divil a more they'll ever get, and it's only a pity they ever got any—but there's an ind o' them now—they're cut down from this out," and here he made an appropriate down stroke of his shillelah through a bunch of thistles that skirted the road. "Where will be their grand doin's now?—eh?—I'd like to know that. Where'll be their lazy livery sarvants?—ow! ow!"—and he sprang lightly over a stile. "And what will they do for their coaches and four?" Here, a lark sprang up at his feet and darted into the air with its thrilling rush of exquisite melody.—"Faith, you've given me my answer sure enough, my purty lark—that's as much as to say, they may go whistle for them—oh, my poor fellows, how I pity yiz;"—and here he broke into a "too ra lal loo" and danced along the path:—then suddenly dropping into silence he resumed

SAMUEL LOVER

his walk, and applying his hand behind his head, cocked up his caubeen¹ and began to rub behind his ear, according to the most approved peasant practice of assisting the powers of reflection.—“Faix an’ it’s myself that’s puzzled to know what’ll the procthors, and the process sarvers, and ‘praisers’ do at all. By gorra they must go rob an the road, since they won’t be let to rob any more in the fields; robbin’ is all that is left for them, for sure they couldn’t turn to any honest thrade afther the coorses they have been used to. Oh what a power o’ miscrayants will be out of bread for the want of their owld thrade of false swearin’. Why the vagabones will be lost, barrin’ they’re sent to Bot²—and indeed if a bridge could be built of false oaths, by my sowkins, they could swear themselves there without wettin’ their feet.”—Here he overtook another peasant, whom he accosted with the universal salutation of “God save you!”—“God save you kindly,” was returned for answer.—“And is it yourself that’s there Mikee Noonan?” said the one first introduced to the reader.

“Indeed it’s myself and nobody else,” said Noonan; “an’ where is it you’re goin’ this fine mornin’?”

“An’ is it yourself that’s axin’ that same, Mikee?—why where is it I would be goin’ but to the berrin’?”

“I thought so in throth. It’s yourself that is always ripe and ready for fun.”

“And small blame to me.”

“Why then it was a mighty complate thing, whoever it was that thought of makin’ a berrin’, out of it.”

“And don’t you know?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

“Why then who ’ud you think now laid it all out?”

“Faix I dunna—maybe ’t was Pether Conolly.”

“No it wasn’t, though Pether’s a cute chap—guess again.”

“Well, was it Phil Mulligan?”

“No it wasn’t, though you made a good offer at it sure enough, for if it wasn’t Phil, it was his sister—”

¹ The *caubeen* was an ancient head-dress of gorgeous material, and the name is applied in derision to a shabby hat.

² The crop being often valued in a *green state* in Ireland, the appraiser becomes a very obnoxious person.

³ Botany Bay.

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

"Tare alive, is it Biddy, it was?"

"'Scure to the one else.—Oh she's the quarest craythur in life.—There's not a thrick out, that one's not up to, and more besides. By the powdherers o' war, she'd bate a field full o' lawyers at schkamin'—she's the Devil's Biddy."

"Why thin but it was a grate iday intirely."

"You may say that in throth—maybe it's we won't have the fun—but see who's before us there. Isn't it that owld Coogan?"

"Sure enough by dad."

"Why thin isn't he the rale fine ould cock to come so far to see the rights o' the thing?"

"Faix he was always the right sort—sure in Nointy-eight, as I hear, he was malthrated a power, and his place rummaged, and himself a'most kilt, bekase he wouldn't inform an his neighbours."

"God's blessin' be an him and the likes av him that wouldn't prove thraitor to a friend in disthress."

Here they came up with the old man to whom they alluded—he was the remains of a stately figure, and his white hair hung at some length round the back of his head and his temples, while a black and well marked eyebrow overshadowed his keen grey eye—the contrast of the dark eyebrow to the white hair rendered the intelligent cast of his features more striking, and he was, altogether, a figure that one would not be likely to pass without notice. He was riding a small horse at an easy pace, and he answered the rather respectful salutation of the two foot passengers with kindness and freedom. They addressed him as "Mr. Coogan," while to them he returned the familiar term "boys."

"And av coorse it's goin' to the berrin, you are, Mr. Coogan, and long life to you."

"Aye, boys.—It's hard for an owld horse to leave off his thricks."

"Owld is it?—faix and it's yourself that has more heart in you this blessed mornin' than many a man that's not half your age."

"By dad I'm not a cowlit, boys, though I kick up my heels sometimes."

SAMUEL LOVER

"Well, you'll never do it younger, air,—but sure why wouldn't you be there when all the country is goin' I hear, and no wondher sure.—By the hole in my hat it's enough, so it is, to make a sick man lave his bed to see the fun that'll be in it, and sure it's right and proper, and shows the sperit that's in the country, when a man like yourself, Mr. Coogan, joins the poor people in doin' it."

"I like to stand up for the right," answered the old man.

"And always was a good warrant to do that same," said Larry, in his most laudatory tone.

"Will you tell us who's that forninst us an the road there?" asked the old man, as he pointed to a person that seemed to make his way with some difficulty, for he laboured under an infirmity of limb that caused a grotesque jerking action in his walk, if walk it might be called.

"Why, thin, don't you know him, Mr. Coogan? by dad I thought there wasn't a parish in the country that didn't know poor Hoppy Houlligan."

It has been often observed before, the love of soubriquet that the Irish possess; but let it not be supposed that their nicknames are given in a spirit of unkindness—far from it. A sense of the ridiculous is so closely interwoven in an Irishman's nature, that he will even jest upon his own misfortunes; and while he indulges in a joke (one of the few indulgences he can command), the person that excites it may as frequently be the object of his openheartedness as his mirth.

"And is that Hoppy Houlligan?" said old Coogan, I often heerd of him, to be sure, but I never seen him before."

"Oh, then, you may see him before and behind now," said Larry; "and, indeed, if he had a match for that odd skirt of his coat, he wouldn't be the worse iv it; and in throth the cordheroy's themselves aren't a bit too good, and there's the laste taste in life of his—"

"Whisht," said the old man, "he is looking back, and maybe he hears you."

"Not he in throth. Sure he's partly bothered."

"How can he play the fiddle then, and be bothered?" said Coogan.

"Faix an' that's the very raison he is bothered; sure he

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

moidhers the ears off of him intirely with the noise of his own fiddle. Oh he's a powerful fiddler."

"So I often heerd, indeed," said the old man.

"He bangs all the fiddlers in the counthry."

"And is in the greatest request," added Noonan.

"Yet he looks tattered enough," said old Coogan.

"Sure you never seen a well dhrest fiddler yet," said Larry.

"Indeed, and now you remind me, I believe not," said the old man. "I suppose they all get more kicks than ha'pence, as the saying is."

"Divil a many kicks Houligan gets; he's a great favorite intirely."

"Why is he in such distress then?" asked Coogan.

"Faith he's not in disthress at all; he's welkim everywhere he goes, and has the best of atin' and dhrinkin' the place affords, wherever he is, and picks up the coppers fast at the fairs, and is no way necessiated in life; though indeed it can't be denied, as he limps along there, that he has a great many ups and downs in the world."

This person, of whom the preceding dialogue treats, was a celebrated fiddler in "these parts," and his familiar name of Hoppy Houligan was acquired, as the reader may already have perceived, from his limping gait. This limp was the consequence of a broken leg, which was one of the consequences of an affray, which is the certain consequence of a fair in Tipperary. Houligan was a highly eharacteristic specimen of an Irish fiddler. As Larry Lanigan said, "You never seen a well dhrest fiddler yet;" but Houligan was a particularly ill fledged bird of the musical tribe. His corduroys have already been hinted at by Larry, as well as his coat, which had lost half the skirt, thereby partially revealing the aforesaid corduroys; or if one might be permitted to indulge in an image, the half skirt that remained served to produce a partial eclipse of the disc of corduroy. This was what we painters call picturesque. By the way, the vulgar are always amazed that some tattered remains of anything is more prized by the painter than the freshest production in all its gloss of novelty. The fiddler's stockings, too, in the neglected falling of their folds round his leg, and the whisp

SAMUEL LOVER

of straw that fringed the opening of his gaping brogues, were valuable additions to the picture; and his hat—But stop,—let me not presume;—his hat it would be a vain attempt to describe. There are two things not to be described, which, to know what they are, you must see.

These two things are Taglioni's dancing and an Irish fiddler's hat. The one is a wonder in action;—the other, an enigma in form.

Houligan's fiddle was as great a curiosity as himself, and, like its master, somewhat the worse for wear. It had been broken some score of times, and yet, by dint of glue, was continued in what an antiquary would call "a fine state of preservation;" that is to say, there was rather more of glue than wood in the article. The stringing of the instrument was as great a piece of patchwork as itself, and exhibited great ingenuity on the part of its owner. Many was the knot above the finger-board and below the bridge; that is, when the fiddle was in the best order; for in case of fractures on the field of action, that is to say, at wake, patron, or fair, where the fiddler, unlike the girl he was playing for, had not two strings to his bow; in such case, I say, the old string should be knotted, wherever it might require to be, and I have heard it insinuated that the music was not a bit the worse of it. Indeed, the only economy that poor Houligan ever practised was in the strings of his fiddle, and those were an admirable exemplification of the proverb of "making both ends meet." Houligan's waistcoat, too, was a curiosity, or rather, a cabinet of curiosities; for he appropriated its pockets to various purposes;—snuff, resin, tobacco, a clasp-knife with half a blade, a piece of flint, a doodeen,⁴ and some bits of twine and ends of fiddle-strings were all huddled together promiscuously. Houligan himself called his waistcoat Noah's ark; for, as he said himself, there was a little of everything in it, barring⁵ money, and that would never stay in his company. His fiddle, partly enfolded in a scanty bit of old baize, was tucked under his left arm, and his right was employed in helping him to hobble along by means of a black-thorn stick, when he was overtaken by the

⁴ The stump of pipe.

⁵ Excepting.

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

three travellers already named, and saluted by all, with the addition of a query as to where he was going.

"An' where would I be goin' but to the berrin'?" said Houligan.

"Throth it's the same answer I expected," said Lanigan. "It would be nothing at all without you."

"I've played at many a weddin'," said Houligan, "but I'm thinkin' there will be more fun at this berrin' than any ten weddin's."

"Indeed you may say that, Hoppy, aghra," said Noonan.

"Why thin, Hoppy jewel," said Lanigan, "what did the skirt o' your coat do to you that you left it behind you, and wouldn't let it see the fun?"

"Deed then I'll tell you, Larry, my boy. I was goin' last night by the by-road that runs up at the back o' the owld house, nigh hand the Widdy Casey's, and I heerd that people was livin' in it since I thravelled the road last, and so I opened the owld iron gate that was as stiff in the hinge as a miser's fist, and the road ladin' up to the house lookin' as lonely as a churchyard, and the grass growin' out through it, and says I to myself, I'm thinkin' it's few darkens your doors, says I; God be with the time the owld squire was here, that staid at home and didn't go abroad out of his own counthry, lettin' the fine stately owld place go to rack and ruin; and faix I was turnin' back, and I wish I did, whin I seen a man comin' down the road, and so I waited till he kem up to me, and I axed if any one was up at the house; Yis, says he; and with that I heerd terrible barkin' intirely, and a great big lump of a dog turned the corner of the house and stud growlin' at me; I'm afeard there's dogs in it, says I to the man; Yis, says he, but they're quite (quiet); so, with that I wint my way, and he wint his way; but my jew'l, the minit I got into the yard, nine great vagabones of dogs fell an me, and I thought they'd ate me alive; and so they would I b'lieve, only I had a cowl'd bones o' mate and some praties that Mrs. Magrane, God bless her, made me put in my pocket when I was goin' the road as I was lavin' her house that mornin' afther the christenin' that was in it, and sure enough lashings and lavings was there; O that's the womam has a heart as big as a king's, and her husband too,

SAMUEL LOVER

in throth; he's a dacent man and keeps mighty fine dhrink in his house. Well, as I was sayin', the cowl'd mate and praties was in my pocket, and by gor the thievin' morodin' villains o' dogs made a dart at the pocket and dragged it clan aff; and thin, my dear, with fightin' among themselves, sthrivin' to come at the mate, the skirt o' my coat was in smidhereens in one minit—divil a lie in it—not a tatther iv it was left together; and it's only a wondher I came off with my life."

"Faith I think so," said Lanigan; "and wasn't it mighty providintial they didn't come at the fiddle; sure what would the counthry do then?"

"Sure enough you may say that," said Houlligan; "and then my bread would be gone as well as my mate. But think o' the unnatharal vagabone that towld me the dogs was quite; sure he came back while I was there, and I ups and I towld him what a shame it was to tell me the dogs was quite. So they are quite, says he; sure there's nine o' them, and only seven o' them bites. Thank you, says I."

There was something irresistibly comic in the quiet manner that Houlligan said, "Thank you, says I;" and the account of his canine adventure altogether excited much mirth amongst his auditors. As they pursued their journey many a joke was passed and repartee returned, and the laugh rang loudly and often from the merry little group as they trudged along. In the course of the next mile's march their numbers were increased by some half dosen, that, one by one, suddenly appeared, by leaping over the hedge on the road, or crossing a stile from some neighbouring path. All these new comers pursued the same route, and each gave the same answer when asked where he was going. It was universally this—

"Why, then, where would I be goin' but to the berrin?"

At a neighbouring confluence of roads straggling parties of from four to five were seen in advance, and approaching in the rear, and the highway soon began to wear the appearance it is wont to do on the occasion of a patron, a fair, or a market day. Larry Lanigan was in evident enjoyment at this increase of numbers; and as the crowd thickened his exultation increased, and he often repeated his ejaculation,

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

already noticed in Larry's opening soliloquy, "Why, then, an' isn't it a grate day intirely for Ireland!!!"

And now, horsemen were more frequently appearing, and their numbers soon amounted to almost a cavalcade; and sometimes a car, that is to say, the car, common to the country for agricultural purposes, might be seen, bearing a cargo of women; videlicet, "the good woman" herself, and her rosy-cheeked daughters, and maybe a cousin or two, with an aide de camp aunt to assist in looking after the young ladies. The roughness of the motion of this primitive vehicle was rendered as accommodating as possible to the gentler sex, by a plentiful shake down of clean straw on the car, over which a feather bed was laid, and the best quilt in the house over that, to make all smart, possibly a piece of hexagon patchwork of "the misthriss" herself, in which the tawdriest calico patterns served to display the taste of the rural sempstress, and stimulated the rising generation to feats of needlework. The car was always provided with a driver, who took such care upon himself "for a rayson he had:" he was almost universally what is called in Ireland "a clane boy," that is to say, a well made, good-looking young fellow, whose eyes were not put into his head for nothing; and these same eyes might be seen wandering backwards occasionally from his immediate charge, the dumb baste, to "take a squint" at some, or maybe one, of his passengers. This explains "the rayson he had" for becoming driver. Sometimes he sat on the crupper of the horse, resting his feet on the shafts of the car, and bending down his head to say something tindher to the colleen that sat next him, totally negligent of his duty as guide. Sometimes when the girl he wanted to be sweet on was seated at the back of the car, this relieved the horse from the additional burthen of his driver, and the clane boy would leave the horse's head and fall in the rear to deludher the craythur, depending on the occasional "hup" or "wo" for the guidance of the baste, when a too near proximity to the dyke by the road side warned him of the necessity of his interference. Sometimes he was called to his duty by the open remonstrance of either the mother or the aunt, or maybe a mischievous cousin, as thus: "Why then, Dinny, what are you about at

SAMUEL LOVER

all at all? God betune me and harm, if you warn't within an inch o' puttin' us all in the gripe o' the ditch;—arrah, lave off your gostherin' there, and mind the horse, will you; a purty thing it 'ud be if my bones was bruk; what are you doin, there at all at the back o' the car, when it's at the baste's head you ought to be?"

"Arrah sure, the baste knows the way herself."

"Faix, I b'lieve so, for it's little behowlden to you she is for showin' her. Augh!!—murther!!!—there we are in the gripe a'most."

"Lave off your screeching, can't you, and be quite. Sure the poor craythur only just wint over to get a mouthful o' the grass by the side o' the ditch."

"What business has she to be atin' now?"

"Bekase she's hungry, I suppose;—and why isn't she fed betther?"

"Bekase rogues stales her oats, Dinny. I seen you in the stable by the same token yisterday."

"Sure enough, ma'am, for I wint there to look for my cowl't that was missin'."

"I thought it was the filly you wor afther, Dinny," said a cousin with a wink; and Dinny grinned, and his sweetheart blushed, while the rest of the girls tittered, the mother pretending not to hear the joke, and bidding Dinny go mind his business by attending to the horse.

But lest I should tire my reader by keeping him so long on the road, I will let him find the rest of his way as well as he can to a certain romantic little valley, where a comfortable farm-house was situated beside a small mountain stream that tumbled along noisily over its rocky bed, and in which some ducks, noisier than the stream, were enjoying their morning bath. The geese were indulging in dignified rest and silence upon the bank; a cock was crowing and strutting with his usual swagger amongst his hens; a pig was endeavouring to save his ears, not from this rural tumult, but from the teeth of a half-terrier dog, who was chasing him away from an iron pot full of potatoes which the pig had dared to attempt some impertinent liberties with; and a girl was bearing into the house a pail of milk which she had just taken from the cow that stood placidly

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

looking on, an admirable contrast to the general bustle of the scene.

Everything about the cottage gave evidence of comfort on the part of its owner, and, to judge from the numbers without and within the house, you would say he did not want for friends; for all, as they arrived at its door, greeted Phelim O'Hara kindly, and Phelim welcomed each new comer with a heartiness that did honour to his grey hairs. Frequently passing to and fro, busily engaged in arranging an ample breakfast in the barn, appeared his daughter, a pretty round-faced girl, with black hair and the long and silky-lashed dark grey eyes of her country, where merriment loves to dwell, and a rosy mouth whose smiles served at once to display her good temper and her fine teeth; her colour gets fresher for a moment, and a look of affectionate recognition brightens her eye, as a lithe young fellow springs briskly over the stepping stones that lead across the stream, and trips lightly up to the girl, who offers her hand in welcome. Who is the happy dog that is so well received by Honor O'Hara, the prettiest girl in that parish or the next, and the daughter of a "snug man" into the bargain?—It is the reader's old acquaintance, Larry Lanigan;—and maybe Larry did not give a squeeze extraordinary to the hand that was presented to him. The father received him well also; indeed, for that matter, the difficulty would have been to find a house in the whole district that Larry would not have been welcome in.

"So here you are at last, Larry," said old O'Hara; "I was wondering you were not here long ago."

"An' so I would, I thank you kindly," said Larry, "only I overtook owld Hoppy here, on the road, and sure I thought I might as well take my time, and wait for poor Hoppy, and bring my welkim along with me;" and here he shoved the fiddler into the house before him.

"The girls will be glad to see the pair o' yiz," said the old man, following.

The interior of the house was crowded with guests, and the usual laughing and courting so often described, as common to such assemblages, were going forward amongst the young people. At the farther end of the largest room in the

SAMUEL LOVER

cottage, a knot of the older men of the party was engaged in the discussion of some subject that seemed to carry deep interest along with it, and at the opposite extremity of the same room, a coffin of very rude construction lay on a small table; and around this coffin stood all the junior part of the company, male and female, and the wildness of their mirth, and the fertility of their jests, over this tenement of mortality and its contents, might have well startled a stranger for a moment, until he saw the nature of the deposit the coffin contained. Enshrouded in a sheaf of wheat lay a pig, between whose open jaws a large potato was placed, and the coffin was otherwise grotesquely decorated.

The reader will wonder, no doubt, at such an exhibition, for certainly never was coffin so applied before; and it is therefore necessary to explain the meaning of all this, and I believe Ireland is the only country in the world where the facts I am about to relate could have occurred.

It may be remembered that some time previously to the date at which my story commences, his majesty's ministers declared that there should be a "total extinction of tithes."

This declaration was received in Ireland by the great mass of the people with the utmost delight, as they fancied they should never have tithes to pay again. The peasantry in the neighbourhood of Templemore formed the very original idea of burying the tithe. It is only amongst an imaginative people that such a notion could have originated; and indeed there is something highly poetical in the conception. The tithe—that which the poor felt the keenest; that which they considered a tax on their industry; that which they looked upon as an hereditary oppression; that hateful thing, they were told, was to be extinct, and, in joyous anticipation of the blessing, they determined to enact an emblematic interment of this terrible enemy.—I think it is not too much to call this idea a fine one; and yet, in the execution of it, they invested it with the broadest marking of the grotesque. Such is the strange compound of an Irish peasant, whose anger is often vented in a jest, and whose mirth is sometimes terrible.

I must here pause for a moment, and request it to be distinctly understood, that, in relating this story, in giving

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

the facts connected with it, and in stating what the Irish peasant's feelings are respecting tithe, I have not the most distant notion of putting forward any opinions of my own on the subject. In the pursuit of my own quiet art, I am happily far removed from the fierce encounter of politics, and I do not wish to offend against the feelings or opinions of any one in my little volume; and I trust, therefore, that I may be permitted to give a sketch of a characteristic incident, as it came to my knowledge, without being mistaken for a partisan.

"I tell the tale as 'twas told to me."

I have said a group of seniors was collected at one end of the room, and, as it is meet to give precedence to age, I will endeavour to give some idea of what was going forward amongst them.

There was one old man of the party whose furrowed forehead, compressed eyebrows, piqued nose, and mouth depressed at the corners, at once indicated to a physiognomist a querulous temper. He was one of your doubters upon all occasions, one of the unfailing elements of an argument;—as he said himself, he was "dubersome" about everything, and he had hence earned the name of Daddy Dubersome amongst his neighbours. Well, Daddy began to doubt the probability that any such boon as the extinction of tithes was to take place, and said, he was "sartin sure 'twas too good news to be thrue."

"Tare anounity," said another, who was the very antithesis of Daddy in his credulous nature, "sure, didn't I see it myself in prent."

"I was towld often that things was in prent," returned Daddy, drily, "that come out lies afther, to my own knowledge."

"But sure," added a third, "sure, didn't the Prime Ear himself lay it all out before the Parleymint?"

"What Prime Ear are you talking about, man dear?" said Daddy, rather testily.

"Why, the Prime Ear of his Majesty, and no less. Is that satisfaction for you, eh?"

"Well, and who is the Prime Ear?"

SAMUEL LOVER

"Why, the Prime Ear of his Majesty, I towld you before. You see, he is the one that hears of everything that is to be done for the whole impire in partic'lar; and bekase he hears of everything, that's the rayson he is called the Prime Ear—and a good rayson it is."

"Well, but what has that to do with the tithes? I ask you again," said Daddy with his usual pertinacity.

Here he was about to be answered by the former speaker, whose definition of "The Premier," had won him golden opinions amongst the by-standers,—when he was prevented by a fourth orator, who rushed into the debate with this very elegant opening—

"Arrah! tare-an-ouns, yiz are settin' me mad, so yiz are. Why, I wondher any one 'id be sitch a fool as to go arguefy with that crooked owld disciple there."

"Meanin' me?" said Daddy.

"I'd be sorry to contheradict you, sir," said the other with an admirable mockery of politeness.

"Thank you, sir," said Daddy," with a dignity more comical than the other's buffoonery.

"You're kindly welkim, Daddy," returned the aggressor. "Sure, you never b'lieved anything yit; and I wondher any one would throw away their time sthrivin' to rightify you."

"Come, boys," said O'Hara, interrupting the discourse, with a view to prevent further bickering, "there's no use talking about the thing now, for whatever way it is, sure we are met to bury the Tithe, and it's proud I am to see you all here to make merry upon the stringth of it, and I think I heerd Honor say this minit that everything is ready in the barn without, so you'll have no difference of opinion about tackling to the breakfast, or I'm mistaken. Come, my hearties, the mate and the praties is crying, 'Who'll ate me?'—away wid you, that's your sort;"—and he enforced his summons to the feast by pushing his guests before him towards the scene of action.

This was an ample barn, where tables of all sorts and sizes were spread, loaded with viands of the most substantial character: wooden forms, three-legged stools, broken-backed chairs, etc. etc. were in requisition for the accommodation of the female portion of the company, and the men attended

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

first to their wants with a politeness which, though deficient in the external graces of polished life, did credit to their natures. The eating part of the business was accompanied with all the clatter that might be expected to attend such an affair; and when the eatables had been tolerably well demolished, O'Hara stood up in the midst of his guests and said he should propose to them a toast, which he knew all the boys would fill their glasses for, and that was, to drink the health of the King, and long life to him, for seeing into the rights of the thing, and doing "such a power" for them, and "more power to his elbow."—This toast was prefaced by a speech to his friends and neighbours upon the hardships of tithe in particular, spiced with the laste taste in life of politics in general; wherein the Repeal of the Union and Daniel O'Connell cut no inconsiderable figure; yet in the midst of the rambling address, certain glimpses of good sense and shrewd observation might be caught; and the many and powerful objections he advanced against the impost that was to be "extinct" so soon, were put forward with a force and distinctness that were worthy of a better speaker, and might have been found difficult to reply to by a more accustomed hand. He protested that he thought he had lived long enough when he had witnessed in his own life-time two such national benefits as the Catholic Emancipation Bill and the Abolition of Tithes. O'Hara further declared, he was the happiest man alive that day only in the regard "of one thing, and that was, that his reverence, Father Hely (the priest) was not there amongst them;" and, certainly, the absence of the pastor on an occasion of festivity in the house of a snug farmer, is of rare occurrence in Ireland. "But you see," said O'Hara, "whin his rivirince heerd what it was we wor goin' to do, he thought it would be purtier on his part for to have nothin' whatsomivir to do with it, in hand, act, or part; and, indeed, boys, that shews a great deal of good breedin' in Father Hely."

This was quite agreed to by the company; and, after many cheers for O'Hara's speech, and some other toasts pertinent to the occasion, the health of O'Hara, as founder of the feast, with the usual addenda of long life, prosperity, etc. to him and his, was drunk, and then preparations were

SAMUEL LOVER

entered into for proceeding with the ceremony of the funeral.

"I believe we have nothing to wait for now," said O'Hara, "since you won't have any more to drink, boys; so let us set about it at once, and make a clane day's work of it."

"Oh, we're not quite ready yit," said Larry Lanigan, who seemed to be a sort of master of the ceremonies on the occasion.

"What's the delay?" asked O'Hara.

"Why, the chief murners is not arrived yit."

"What murners are you talkin' about, man?" said the other.

"Why, you know, at a grand berrin' they have always chief murners, and there's a pair that I ordhered to be brought here for that same."

"Myself doesn't know anything about murners," said O'Hara, "for I never seen anything finer than the keeners' at a berrin'; but Larry's up to the ways of the quolity, as well as of his own sort."

"But you wouldn't have keeners for the Tithe, would you? Sure, the keeners is to say all the good they can of the departed, and more if they can invint it; but, sure, the divil a good thing at all they could say of the Tithe, barrin' it was lies they wor tellin', and so it would only be throwin' away throuble."

"Thru for you, Lanigan."

"Besides, it is like a grand berrin' belongin' to the quol'ty to have chief murners, and you know the Tithe was aigual to a lord or a king a'most for power."

In a short time the "murners," as Larry called them, arrived in custody of half a dozen of Larry's chosen companions, to whom he had entrusted the execution of the mission. These chief mourners were two tithe proctors, who had been taken forcibly from their homes by the Lanigan party, and threatened with death unless they attended the summons of Larry to be present at "The Berrin'."

Their presence was hailed with a great shout, and the poor devils looked excessively frightened; but they were assured by O'Hara they had nothing to fear.

* Keeners are persons who sing the Ulican, or death wail, round the coffin of the deceased, and repeat the good deeds of the departed.

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

"I depend an you, Mr. O'Hara, for seeing us safe out of their hands," said one of them, for the other was dumb from terror.

"So you may," was the answer O'Hara returned. "Hurt nor harm shall not be put an you; I give you my word o' that."

"Divil a harm," said Larry. "We'll only put you into a shoot o' clothes that is ready for you, and you may look as melancholy as you plaze, for it is murners you are to be. Well, Honor," said he, addressing O'Hara's daughter, "have you got the mithres and vestments ready, as I towld you?"

"Yes," said Honor; "here comes Biddy Mulligan with them from the house, for Biddy herself helped me to make them."

"And who had a bettther right?" said Larry, "when it was herself that laid it all out complate, the whole thing from the beginnin', and sure enough but it was a bright thought of her. Faix, he'll be the looky man that gets Biddy, yet."

"You had bettther have her yourself, I think," said Honor, with an arch look at Larry, full of meaning.

"An' it's that same I've been thinking of for some time," said Larry, laughing, and returning Honor's look with one that repaid it with interest. "But where is she at all? Oh, here she comes with the duds, and Mike Noonan afther her; throth, he's following her about all this mornin' like a sucking calf. I'm afeard Mikee is going to sarcumvint me wid Biddy; but he'd bettther mind what he's at."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the advance of Biddy Mulligan, "and Mikee Noonan afther her," bearing some grotesque imitation of clerical vestments made of coarse sacking, and two enormous head-dresses made of straw, in the fashion of mitres; these were decorated with black rags hung fantastically about them, while the vestments were smeared over with black stripes in no very regular order.

"Come here," said Larry to the tithe proctors; "come here, antil we put you into your regimentals."

"What are you goin' to do with us, Mr. Lanigan?" said

SAMUEL LOVER

the frightened poor wretch, while his knees knocked together with terror.

"We are just goin' to make a pair o' bishops of you," said Lanigan; "and sure that's promotion for you."

"Oh, Mr. O'Hara," said the proctor, "sure you won't let them tie us up in them sacks."

"Do you hear what he calls the iligant vestments we made a' purpose for him? They are sackcloth, to be sure, and why not—seeing as how that you are to be the chief murners? and sackcloth and ashes is what you must be dhressed in, accordin' to rayson. Here, my buck," said the rollicking Larry, "I'll be your vally de sham myself," and he proceeded to put the dress on the terrified tithe proctor.

"Oh, Mr. Lanigan dear!" said he, "don't murther me, if you plaze."

"Murther you!—arraah, who's going to murther you? Do you think I'd dirty my hands wid killin' a snakin' tithe procthor?"

"Indeed, that's thrue, Mr. Lanigan; it would not be worth your while."

"Here now," said Larry, "howld your head till I put the mithre an you, and make you a bishop complate. But wait a bit; throth, I was nigh forgettin' the ashes, and that would have been a great loss to both o' you, bekase you wouldn't be right murners at all without them, and the people would think you wor only purtendin'." This last bit of Larry's waggery produced great merriment amongst the by-standers, for the unfortunate tithe proctors were looking at that moment most doleful examples of wretchedness. A large shovelful of turf ashes was now shaken over their heads, and then they were decorated with their mitres. "Tut, man," said Larry to one of them, "don't thrimble like a dog in a wet sack. Oh, thin, look at him how pale he's turned, the dirty coward that he is. I tell you, we're not goin' to do you any hurt, so you needn't be lookin' in sitch mortal dhread. By gor, you're as white as pen'orth o' curds in a sweep's fist."

With many such jokes at the expense of the tithe proctors, they were attired in their caricature robes and mitres, and presented with a pair of pitchforks, by way of crosiers, and were recommended at the same time to make hay while the

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

sun shone, "bekase the fine weather would be lavin' them soon;" with many other bitter sarcasms, conveyed in the language of ridicule.

The procession was now soon arranged, and, as they had their chief mourners, it was thought a good point of contrast to have their chief rejoicers as well. To this end, in a large cart they put a sow and her litter of pigs, decorated with ribands, a sheaf of wheat standing proudly erect, a bowl of large potatoes, which, at Honor O'Hara's suggestion, were boiled, that they might be laughing on the occasion, and over these was hung a rude banner, on which was written, "We may stay at home now."

In this cart, Hoppy Houligan, the fiddler, with a piper as a coadjutor, rasped and squeaked their best to the tune of "Go to the devil and shake yourself," which was meant to convey a delicate hint to the tithes for the future.

The whole assemblage of people, and it was immense, then proceeded to the spot where it was decided the tithe was to be interred, as the most fitting place to receive such a deposit, and this place was called by what they considered the very appropriate name of "The Devil's Bit."

In a range of hills, in the neighbourhood where this singular occurrence took place, there is a sudden gap occurs in the outline of the ridge, which is stated to have been formed by his sable majesty taking a bite out of the mountain; whether it was spite or hunger that had made him do so, is not ascertained, but he evidently did not consider it a very savoury morsel; for it is said, he spat it out again, and the rejected morceau forms the rock of Cashel. Such is the wild legend of this wild spot, and here was the interment of the tithe to be achieved, as an appropriate addition to the "Devil's Bit."

The procession now moved onward, and, as it proceeded, its numbers were considerably augmented. Its approach was looked for by a scout on every successive hill it came within sight of, and a wild halloo, or the winding of a cow's horn immediately succeeded, which called forth scores of fresh attendants upon "the berrin." Thus, their numbers

⁷ I think Ware mentions an ancient crown being dug up at the "The Devil's Bit."

SAMUEL LOVER

were increased every quarter of a mile they went, until, on their arriving at the foot of the hill which they were to ascend, to reach their final destination, the multitude assembled presented a most imposing appearance. In the course of their march, the great point of attraction for the young men and women was the cart that bore the piper and fiddler, and the road was rather danced than walked over in this quarter. The other distinguished portion of the train was where the two tithe proctors played their parts of chief mourners. They were the delight of all the little ragged urchins in the country; the half-naked young vagabonds hung on their flanks, plucked at their vestments, made wry faces at them, called them by many ridiculous names, and an occasional lump of clay was silyly flung at their mitres, which were too tempting a "cock shot" to be resisted. The multitude now wound up the hill, and the mingling of laughter, of singing, and shouting, produced a wild compound of sound, that rang far and wide. As they doubled an angle in the road, which opened the Devil's Bit full upon their view, they saw another crowd assembled there, which consisted of persons from the other side of the hills, who could not be present at the breakfast, nor join the procession, but who attended upon the spot where the interment was to take place. As soon as the approach of the funeral train was perceived from the top of the hill, the mass of people there sent forth a shout of welcome, which was returned by those from below.

Short space now served to bring both parties together, and the digging of a grave did not take long with such a plenty of able hands for the purpose. "Come, boys," said Larry Lanigan to two or three of his companions, "while they are digging the grave here, we'll go cut some sods to put over it when the thievin' tithe is buried; not for any respect I have for it in partic'lar, but that we may have the place smooth and clane to dance over afterwards; and may I never shuffle the brogue again, if myself and Honor O'Hara won't be the first pair that'll set you a pattrern."

All was soon ready for the interment; the tithe coffin was lowered into the pit, and the shouting that rent the air was terrific.

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

As they were about to fill up the grave with earth their wild hurra, that had rung out so loudly, was answered by a fierce shout at some distance, and all eyes were turned towards the quarter whence it arose, to see from whom it proceeded, for it was, evidently, a solitary voice that had thus arrested their attention.

Tolling up the hill, supporting himself with a staff, and bearing a heavy load in a wallet slung over his shoulders, appeared an elderly man whose dress proclaimed him at once to be a person who depended on eleemosynary contributions for his subsistence: and many, when they caught the first glimpse of him, proclaimed, at once, that it was "Tatther the Road" was coming.

"Tatther the Road" was the very descriptive name that had been applied to this poor creature, for he was always travelling about the highways; he never rested even at nights in any of the houses of the peasants, who would have afforded him shelter, but seemed to be possessed by a restless spirit, that urged him to constant motion. Of course the poor creature sometimes slept, but it must have been under such shelter as a hedge, or cave, or gravel pit might afford, for in the habitation of man he was never seen to sleep; and, indeed, I never knew any one who had seen this strange being in the act of sleep. This fact attached a sort of mysterious character to the wanderer, and many would tell you that "he wasn't right," and firmly believed that he never slept at all. His mind was unsettled, and though he never became offensive in any degree from his mental aberration, yet the nature of his distemper often induced him to do very extraordinary things, and whenever the gift of speech was upon him, (for he was habitually taciturn), he would make an outpouring of some rhapsody, in which occasional bursts of very powerful language and striking imagery would occur. Indeed the peasants said that "sometimes 't would make your hair stand on end to hear Tatther the Road make a notation."

This poor man's history, as far as I could learn, was a very melancholy one. In the rebellion of '98 his cabin had been burned over his head by the yeomanry, after every violation that could disgrace his hearth had been committed.

SAMUEL LOVER

He and his son, then little more than a boy, had attempted to defend their hut, and they were both left for dead. His wife and his daughter, a girl of sixteen, were also murdered. The wretched father, unfortunately, recovered his life, but his reason was gone for ever. Even in the midst of his poverty and madness, there was a sort of respect attached to this singular man. Though depending on charity for his meat and drink, he could not well be called a beggar, for he never asked for any thing—even on the road, when some passenger, ignorant of his wild history, saw the poor wanderer, a piece of money was often bestowed to the silent appeal of his rags, his haggard features, and his grizly hair and beard.

Thus eternally up and down the country was he moving about, and hence his name of "Tatther the Road."

It was not long until the old man gained the summit of the hill, but while he was approaching, many were the "wonders" what in the name of fortune could have brought Tatther the Road there.—"And by dad," said one, "he's pullin' fut¹ at a great rate, and it's wondherful how an owld cock like him can clamber up the hill so fast."

"Aye," said another, "and with the woight he's carrying too."

"Sure enough," said a third. "Faix he's got a fine lob in his wallet to-day."

"Whisht!" said O'Hara.—"Here he comes, and his ears are as sharp as needles."

"And his eyes too," said a woman. "Lord be good to me, did you ever see poor Tatther's eyes look so terrible bright afore?"

And indeed this remark was not uncalled for, for the eyes of the old man almost gleamed from under the shaggy brows that were darkly bent over them, as, with long strides, he approached the crowd which opened before him, and he stalked up to the side of the grave and threw down the ponderous wallet, which fell to the ground with a heavy crash.

"You were going to close the grave too soon," were the first words he uttered.

¹ *Pull foot* is a figurative expression to express making haste.

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

"Sure when the tithe is wanst buried, what more have we to do?" said one of the by-standers.

"Aye, you have put the tithe in the grave—but will it stay there?"

"Why indeed," said Larry Lanigan, "I think he'd be a bowld resurrection man that would come to rise it."

"I have brought you something here to lie heavy on it, and 't will never rise more," said the maniac, striking forth his arm fiercely, and clenching his hand firmly.

"And what have you brought us, Agrah?" said O'Hara kindly to him.

"Look here," said the other, unfolding his wallet and displaying five or six large stones.

Some were tempted to laugh, but a mysterious dread of the wild being before them, prevented any outbreak of mirth.

"God help the craythur!" said a woman, so loud as to be heard. "He has brought a bag full o' stones to throw a top o' the tithes to keep them down—O wisha! wisha! poor craythur!"

"Aye—stones!"—said the maniac; "but do you know what stones these are? Look woman—" and his manner became intensely impressive from the excitement even of madness, under which he was acting.—"Look, I say—there's not a stone there that's not a curse—aye a curse so heavy that nothing can ever rise that falls under it."

"Oh I don't want to say aginst it, dear," said the woman.

The maniac did not seem to notice her submissive answer, but pursuing his train of madness, continued his address in his native tongue, whose figurative and poetical construction was heightened in its effect, by a manner and action almost theatrically descriptive.

"You all remember the Widow Dempsy. The first choice of her bosom was long gone, but the son she loved was left to her, and her heart was not quite lonely. And at the widow's hearth there was still a welcome for the stranger—and the son of her heart made his choice, like the father before him, and the joy of the widow's house was increased, for the son of her heart was happy.—And in due time the widow welcomed the fair-haired child of her son to the world, and a dream of her youth came over her, as she saw

THE BURIAL OF THE TITHE

the joy of her son and her daughter, when they kissed the fair-haired child.—But the hand of God was heavy in the land, and the fever fell hard upon the poor—and the widow was again bereft,—for the son of her heart was taken, and the wife of his bosom also—and the fair-haired child was left an orphan. And the widow would have laid down her bones and died, but for the fair-haired child that had none to look to but her. And the widow blessed God's name and bent her head to the blow—and the orphan that was left to her was the pulse of her heart, and often she looked on his pale face with a fearful eye, for health was not on the cheek of the boy—but she cherished him tenderly.

“But the ways of the world grew crooked to the lone woman, when the son, that was the staff of her age, was gone, and one trouble followed another, but still the widow was not quite destitute.—And what was it brought the heavy stroke of distress and disgrace to the widow's door?—The tithe! The widow's cow was driven and sold to pay a few shillings; the drop of milk was no longer in the widow's house, and the tender child that needed the nourishment, wasted away before the widow's eyes, like snow from the ditch, and died: and fast the widow followed the son of her heart and his fair-haired boy.

“And now, the home of an honest race is a heap of rubbish; and the bleak wind whistles over the hearth where the warm welcome was ever found; and the cold frog crouches under the ruins.

“These stones are from that desolate place, and the curse of God that follows oppression is on them.—And let them be cast into the grave, and they will lie with the weight of a mountain on the monster that is buried for ever.”

So saying, he lifted stone after stone, and flung them fiercely into the pit; then, after a moment's pause upon its verge, he suddenly strode away with the same noiseless step that he had approached, and left the scene in silence.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

BY CHARLES READE

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

By CHARLES READE

I

IN Charles the Second's day the "Swan" was denounced by the dramatists as a house where unfaithful wives and mistresses met their gallants.

But in the next century, when John Clarke was the Freeholder, no special imputation of that sort rested on it: it was a country inn with large stables, horsed the Brentford coach, and entertained man and beast on journeys long or short. It had also permanent visitors, especially in summer; for it was near London, and yet a rural retreat; meadows on each side, Hyde Park at back, Knightsbridge Green in front.

Amongst the permanent lodgers was Mr. Gardiner, a substantial man; and Captain Cowen, a retired officer of moderate means, had lately taken two rooms for himself and his son. Mr. Gardiner often joined the company in the public room, but the Cowens kept to themselves up-stairs.

This was soon noticed and resented, in that age of few books and free converse. Some said, "Oh, we are not good enough for him!" others inquired what a half-pay captain had to give himself airs about. Candor interposed and supplied the climax, "Nay, my masters, the Captain may be in hiding from duns, or from the runners: now I think on't, the York mail was robbed scarce a se'nnight before his worship came a-hiding here."

But the landlady's tongue ran the other way. Her weight was sixteen stone, her sentiments were her interests, and her tongue her tomahawk. "'Tis pity," said she, one day, "some folk can't keep their tongues from blackening of their betters. The Captain is a civil-spoken gentleman—Lord send there were more of them in these parts!—as takes his hat off to me whenever he meets me, and pays his reckoning weekly. If

CHARLES READE

he has a mind to be private, what business is that of yours, or ours? But curs must bark at their betters."

Detraction, thus roughly quelled for certain seconds, revived at intervals whenever Dame Cust's broad back was turned. It was mildly encountered one evening by Gardiner. "Nay, good sirs," said he, "you mistake the worthy Captain. To have fought at Blenheim and Malplaquet, no man has less vanity. 'Tis for his son he holds aloof. He guards the youth like a mother, and will not have him to hear our tap-room jests. He worships the boy—a sullen lout, sirs; but paternal love is blind. He told me once he had loved his wife dearly, and lost her young, and this was all he had of her. 'And,' said he, 'I'd spill blood like water for him, my own the first.'—'Then, sir,' says I, 'I fear he will give you a sore heart one day.'—'And welcome,' says my Captain, and his face like iron."

Somebody remarked that no man keeps out of company who is good company; but Mr. Gardiner parried that dogma. "When young master is abed, my neighbor does sometimes invite me to share a bottle; and a sprightlier companion I would not desire. Such stories of battles, and duels, and love intrigues!"

"Now there's an old fox for you," said one, approvingly. It reconciled him to the Captain's decency to find that it was only hypocrisy.

"I like not—a man—who wears—a mask," hiccoughed a hitherto silent personage, revealing his clandestine drunkenness and unsuspected wisdom at one blow.

These various theories were still fermenting in the bosom of the "Swan," when one day there rode up to the door a gorgeous officer, hot from the minister's levee, in scarlet and gold, with an order like a star-fish glittering on his breast. His servant, a private soldier, rode behind him, and, slipping hastily from his saddle, held his master's horse while he dismounted. Just then Captain Cowen came out for his afternoon walk. He started, and cried out, "Colonel Barrington!"

"Ay, brother," cried the other, and instantly the two officers embraced, and even kissed each other, for that feminine custom had not yet retired across the Channel; and these were soldiers who had fought and bled side by

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

side, and nursed each other in turn; and your true soldier does not nurse by halves: his vigilance and tenderness are an example to women, and he rustleth not.

Captain Cowen invited Colonel Barrington to his room, and that warrior marched down the passage after him, single file, with long brass spurs and sabre clinking at his heels; and the establishment ducked and smiled, and respected Captain Cowen for the reason we admire the moon.

Seated in Cowen's room, the new-comer said, heartily, "Well, Ned, I come not empty-handed. Here is thy pension at last;" and handed him a parchment with a seal like a poached egg.

Cowen changed color, and thanked him with an emotion he rarely betrayed, and gloated over the precious document. His cast-iron features relaxed, and he said, "It comes in the nick of time, for now I can send my dear Jack to college."

This led somehow to an exposure of his affairs. He had just £110 a year, derived from the sale of his commission, which he had invested, at fifteen per cent., with a well-known mercantile house in the City. "So now," said he, "I shall divide it all in three; Jack will want two parts to live at Oxford, and I can do well enough here on one." The rest of the conversation does not matter, so I dismiss it and Colonel Barrington for the time. A few days afterward Jack went to college, and Captain Cowen reduced his expenses, and dined at the shilling ordinary, and, indeed, took all his moderate repasts in public.

Instead of the severe and reserved character he had worn while his son was with him, he now shone out a boon companion, and sometimes kept the table in a roar with his marvellous mimicries of all the characters, male or female, that lived in the inn or frequented it, and sometimes held them breathless with adventures, dangers, intrigues, in which a leading part had been played by himself or his friends.

He became quite a popular character, except with one or two envious bodies, whom he eclipsed; they revenged themselves by saying it was all braggadocio: his battles had been fought over a bottle, and by the fireside.

The district east and west of Knightsbridge had long been infested with foot-pads; they robbed passengers in the

CHARLES READE

country lanes, which then abounded, and sometimes on the King's highway, from which those lanes offered an easy escape.

One moonlight night Captain Cowen was returning home alone from an entertainment at Fulham, when suddenly the air seemed to fill with a woman's screams and cries. They issued from a lane on his right hand. He whipped out his sword and dashed down the lane. It took a sudden turn, and in a moment he came upon three foot-pads, robbing and maltreating an old gentleman and his wife. The old man's sword lay at a distance, struck from his feeble hand; the woman's tongue proved the better weapon, for, at least, it brought an ally.

The nearest robber, seeing the Captain come at him with his drawn sword glittering in the moonshine, fired hastily, and grazed his cheek, and was skewered like a frog the next moment; his cry of agony mingled with two shouts of dismay, and the other foot-pads fled; but, even as they turned, Captain Cowen's nimble blade entered the shoulder of one, and pierced the fleshy part. He escaped, however, but howling and bleeding.

Captain Cowen handed over the lady and gentleman to the people who flocked to the place, now the work was done, and the disabled robber to the guardians of the public peace, who arrived last of all. He himself withdrew apart and wiped his sword very carefully and minutely with a white pocket-handkerchief, and then retired.

He was so far from parading his exploit that he went round by the park and let himself into the "Swan" with his private key, and was going quietly to bed, when the chambermaid met him, and up flew her arms, with cries of dismay. "Oh, Captain! Captain! Look at you—smothered in blood! I shall faint."

"Tush! Silly wench!" said Captain Cowen. "I am not hurt."

"Not hurt, sir? And bleeding like a pig! Your cheek—your poor cheek!"

Captain Cowen put up his hand, and found that blood was really welling from his cheek and ear.

He looked grave for a moment, then assured her it was

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

but a scratch, and offered to convince her of that. "Bring me some luke-warm water, and thou shalt be my doctor. But, Barbara, prithee publish it not."

Next morning an officer of justice inquired after him at the "Swan," and demanded his attendance at Bow Street, at two that afternoon, to give evidence against the footpads. This was the very thing he wished to avoid; but there was no evading the summons.

The officer was invited into the bar by the landlady, and sang the gallant Captain's exploit, with his own variations. The inn began to ring with Cowen's praises. Indeed, there was now but one detractor left—the hostler, Daniel Cox, a drunken fellow of sinister aspect, who had for some time stared and lowered at Captain Cowen, and muttered mysterious things, doubts as to his being a real captain, etc. Which incoherent murmurs of a muddle-headed drunkard were not treated as oracular by any human creature, though the stable-boy once went so far as to say, "I sometimes almost thinks as how our Dan do know summut; only he don't rightly know what 'tis, along o' being always muddled in liquor."

Cowen, who seemed to notice little, but noticed everything, had observed the lowering looks of this fellow, and felt he had an enemy: it even made him a little uneasy, though he was too proud and self-possessed to show it.

With this exception, then, everybody greeted him with hearty compliments, and he was cheered out of the inn, marching to Bow Street.

Daniel Cox, who—as accidents will happen—was sober that morning, saw him out, and then put on his own coat.

"Take thou charge of the stable, Sam," said he.

"Why, where be'st going, at this time o' day?"

"I be going to Bow Street," said Daniel doggedly.

At Bow Street Captain Cowen was received with great respect, and a seat given him by the sitting magistrate while some minor cases were disposed of.

In due course the highway robbery was called and proved by the parties who, unluckily for the accused, had been actually robbed before Cowen interfered.

Then the oath was tendered to Cowen: he stood up by

CHARLES READE

the magistrate's side and deposed, with military brevity and exactness, to the facts I have related, but refused to swear to the identity of the individual culprit who stood pale and trembling at the dock.

The attorney for the Crown, after pressing in vain, said, "Quite right, Captain Cowen; a witness cannot be too scrupulous."

He then called an officer, who had found the robber leaning against a railing fainting from loss of blood, scarce a furlong from the scene of the robbery, and wounded in the shoulder. That let in Captain Cowen's evidence, and the culprit was committed for trial, and soon after peached upon his only comrade at large. The other lay in the hospital at Newgate.

The magistrate complimented Captain Cowen on his conduct and his evidence, and he went away universally admired. Yet he was not elated, nor indeed content. Sitting by the magistrate's side, after he had given his evidence, he happened to look all round the Court, and in a distant corner he saw the enormous mottled nose and sinister eyes of Daniel Cox glaring at him with a strange but puzzled expression.

Cowen had learned to read faces, and he said to himself: "What is there in that ruffian's mind about me? Did he know me years ago? I cannot remember him. Curse the beast—one would almost—think—he is cudgelling his drunken memory. I'll keep an eye on you."

He went home thoughtful and discomposed, because this drunkard glowered at him so. The reception he met with at the "Swan" effaced the impression. He was received with acclamations, and now that publicity was forced on him, he accepted it, and revelled in popularity.

About this time he received a letter from his son, enclosing a notice from the college tutor, speaking highly of his ability, good conduct, devotion to study.

This made the father swell with loving pride.

Jack hinted modestly that there were unavoidable expenses, and his funds were dwindling. He enclosed an account that showed how the money went.

The father wrote back and bade him be easy; he should

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

have every farthing required, and speedily. "For," said he, "my half-year's interest is due now."

Two days after he had a letter from his man of business, begging him to call. He went with alacrity, making sure his money was waiting for him as usual.

His lawyer received him very gravely, and begged him to be seated. He then broke to him some appalling news. The great house of Brown, Molyneux and Co. had suspended payments at noon the day before, and were not expected to pay a shilling in the pound. Captain Cowen's little fortune was gone—all but his pension of eighty pounds a year.

He sat like a man turned to stone; then he clasped his hands with agony, and uttered two words—no more—"My son!"

He rose and left the place like one in a dream. He got down to Knightsbridge, he hardly knew how. At the very door of the inn he fell down in a fit. The people of the inn were round him in a moment, and restoratives freely supplied. His sturdy nature soon revived; but, with the moral and physical shock, his lips were slightly distorted over his clenched teeth. His face, too, was ashy pale.

When he came to himself, the first face he noticed was that of Daniel Cox, eying him, not with pity, but with puzzled curiosity. Cowen shuddered and closed his own eyes to avoid this blighting glare. Then, without opening them, he muttered, "What has befallen me? I feel no wound."

"Laws forbid, sir!" said the landlady, leaning over him. "Your honor did but swoon for once, to show you was born of a woman, and not made of nought but steel. Here, you gaping loons and sluts, help the Captain to his room amongst ye, and then go about your business."

This order was promptly executed, so far as assisting Captain Cowen to rise; but he was no sooner on his feet than he waved them all from him haughtily, and said, "Let me be. It is the mind—it is the mind;" and he smote his forehead in despair, for now it all came back on him.

Then he rushed into the inn, and locked himself into his room. Female curiosity buzzed about the doors, but was not admitted until he had recovered his fortitude, and formed a

CHARLES READE

bitter resolution to defend himself and his son against all mankind.

At last there came a timid tap, and a mellow voice said, "It is only me, Captain. Prithee let me in."

He opened to her, and there was Barbara with a large tray and a snow-white cloth. She spread a table deftly, and uncovered a roast capon, and uncorked a bottle of white port, talking all the time. "The mistress says you must eat a bit, and drink this good wine, for her sake. Indeed, sir, 'twill do you good after your swoon." With many such encouraging words she got him to sit down and eat, and then filled his glass and put it to his lips. He could not eat much, but he drank the white port—a wine much prized, and purer than the purple vintage of our day.

At last came Barbara's post-dict. "But alack! to think of your fainting dead away! O Captain, what is the trouble?"

The tear was in Barbara's eye, though she was the emissary of Dame Cust's curiosity, and all curiosity herself.

Captain Cowen, who had been expecting this question for some time, replied, doggedly, "I have lost the best friend I had in the world."

"Dear heart!" said Barbara, and a big tear of sympathy, that had been gathering ever since she entered the room, rolled down her cheeks.

She put up a corner of her apron to her eyes. "Alas, poor soul!" said she. "Ay, I do know how hard it is to love and lose; but bethink you, sir, 'tis the lot of man. Our own turn must come. And you have your son left to thank God for, and a warm friend or two in this place, thof they be but humble."

"Ay, good wench," said the soldier, his iron nature touched for a moment by her goodness and simplicity, "and none I value more than thee. But leave me awhile."

The young woman's honest cheeks reddened at the praise of such a man. "Your will's my pleasure, sir," said she, and retired, leaving the capon and the wine.

Any little compunction he might have at refusing his confidence to this humble friend did not trouble him long. He looked on women as leaky vessels; and he had firmly resolved not to make his situation worse by telling the base

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

world that he was poor. Many a hard rub had put a fine point on this man of steel.

He glozed the matter, too, in his own mind. "I told her no lie. I have lost my best friend, for I've lost my money."

From that day Captain Cowen visited the tap-room no more, and indeed seldom went out by daylight. He was all alone now, for Mr. Gardiner was gone to Wiltshire to collect his rents. In his solitary chamber Cowen ruminated his loss and the villany of mankind, and his busy brain revolved scheme after scheme to repair the impending ruin of his son's prospects. It was there the iron entered his soul. The example of the very footpads he had baffled occurred to him in his more desperate moments, but he fought the temptation down: and in due course one of them was transported, and one hung; the other languished in Newgate.

By and by he began to be mysteriously busy, and the door always locked. No clew was ever found to his labors but bits of melted wax in the fender and a tuft or two of gray hair, and it was never discovered in Knightsbridge that he often begged in the City at dusk, in a disguise so perfect that a frequenter of the "Swan" once gave him a groat. Thus did he levy his tax upon the stony place that had undone him.

Instead of taking his afternoon walk as heretofore, he would sit disconsolate on the seat of a staircase window that looked into the yard, and so take the air and sun: and it was owing to this new habit he overheard, one day, a dialogue, in which the foggy voice of the hostler predominated at first. He was running down Captain Cowen to a pot-boy. The pot-boy stood up for him. That annoyed Cox. He spoke louder and louder the more he was opposed, till at last he bawled out, "I tell ye I've seen him a-sitting by the judge, and I've seen him in the dock."

At these words Captain Cowen recoiled, though he was already out of sight, and his eye glittered like a basilisk's.

But immediately a new voice broke upon the scene, a woman's. "Thou foul-mouthed knave! Is it for thee to

CHARLES READE

slander men of worship, and give the inn a bad name? Remember I have but to lift my finger to hang thee, so drive me not to't. Begone to thy horses this moment; thou art not fit to be among Christians. Begone, I say, or it shall be the worse for thee;" and she drove him across the yard, and followed him up with a current of invectives, eloquent even at a distance though the words were no longer distinct: and who should this be but the housemaid, Barbara Lamb, so gentle, mellow, and melodious before the gentlefolk, and especially her hero, Captain Cowen!

As for Daniel Cox, he cowered, writhed, and wriggled away before her, and slipped into the stable.

Captain Cowen was now soured by trouble, and this persistent enmity of that fellow roused at last a fixed and deadly hatred in his mind, all the more intense that fear mingled with it.

He sounded Barbara; asked her what nonsense that ruffian had been talking, and what he had done that she could hang him for. But Barbara would not say a malicious word against a fellow-servant in cold blood. "I can keep a secret," said she. "If he keeps his tongue off you, I'll keep mine."

"So be it," said Cowen. "Then I warn you I am sick of his insolence; and drunkards must be taught not to make enemies of sober men nor fools of wise men." He said this so bitterly that, to soothe him, she begged him not to trouble about the ravings of a sot. "Dear heart," said she, "nobody heeds Dan Cox."

Some days afterward she told him that Dan had been drinking harder than ever, and wouldn't trouble honest folk long, for he had the delusions that go before a drunkard's end; why, he had told the stable-boy he had seen a vision of himself climb over the garden wall, and enter the house by the back door. "The poor wretch says he knew himself by his bottle nose and his cowskin waistcoat; and, to be sure, there is no such nose in the parish—thank Heaven for't!—and not many such waistcoats." She laughed heartily, but Cowen's lip curled in a venomous sneer. He said: "More likely 'twas the knave himself. Look to your spoons, if such a face as that walks by night." Barbara turned grave

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

directly; he eyed her askant, and saw the random shot had gone home.

Captain Cowen now often slept in the City, alleging business.

Mr. Gardiner wrote from Salisbury, ordering his room to be ready and his sheets well aired.

One afternoon he returned with a bag and a small valise, prodigiously heavy. He had a fire lighted, though it was a fine autumn, for he was chilled with his journey, and invited Captain Cowen to sup with him. The latter consented, but begged it might be an early supper, as he must sleep in the City.

"I am sorry for that," said Gardiner. "I have a hundred and eighty guineas there in that bag, and a man could get into my room from yours."

"Not if you lock the middle door," said Cowen. "But I can leave you the key of my outer door, for that matter."

This offer was accepted; but still Mr. Gardiner felt uneasy. There had been several robberies at inns, and it was a rainy, gusty night. He was depressed and ill at ease. Then Captain Cowen offered him his pistols, and helped him load them—two bullets in each. He also went and fetched him a bottle of the best port, and after drinking one glass with him, hurried away, and left his key with him for further security.

Mr. Gardiner, left to himself, made up a great fire and drank a glass or two of the wine; it seemed remarkably heady and raised his spirits. After all, it was only for one night; to-morrow he would deposit his gold in the bank. He began to unpack his things and put his nightdress to the fire; but by and by he felt so drowsy that he did but take his coat off, put his pistols under the pillow, and lay down on the bed and fell fast asleep.

That night Barbara Lamb awoke twice, thinking each time she heard doors open and shut on the floor below her.

But it was a gusty night, and she concluded it was most likely the wind. Still a residue of uneasiness made her rise at five instead of six, and she lighted her tinder and came down with a rushlight. She found Captain Cowen's door wide open; it had been locked when she went to bed. That

CHARLES READE

alarmed her greatly. She looked in. A glance was enough. She cried, "Thieves! thieves!" and in a moment uttered scream upon scream.

In an incredibly short time pale and eager faces of men and women filled the passage.

Cowen's room, being open, was entered first. On the floor lay what Barbara had seen at a glance—his portmanteau rifled and the clothes scattered about. The door of communication was ajar; they opened it, and an appalling sight met their eyes: Mr. Gardiner was lying in a pool of blood and moaning feebly. There was little hope of saving him; no human body could long survive such a loss of the vital fluid. But it so happened there was a country surgeon in the house. He stanchd the wounds—there were three—and somebody or other had the sense to beg the victim to make a statement. He was unable at first; but, under powerful stimulants, revived at last, and showed a strong wish to aid justice in avenging him. By this time they had got a magistrate to attend, and he put his ear to the dying man's lips; but others heard, so hushed was the room and so keen the awe and curiosity of each panting heart.

"I had gold in my portmanteau, and was afraid. I drank a bottle of wine with Captain Cowen, and he left me. He lent me his key and his pistols. I locked both doors. I felt very sleepy, and lay down. When I woke, a man was leaning over my portmanteau. His back was toward me. I took a pistol, and aimed steadily. It missed fire. The man turned and sprang on me. I had caught up a knife, one we had for supper. I stabbed him with all my force. He wrested it from me, and I felt piercing blows. I am slain. Ay, I am slain."

"But the man, sir. Did you not see his face at all?"

"Not till he fell on me. But then, very plainly. The moon shone."

"Pray describe him."

"Broken hat."

"Yes."

"Hairy waistcoat."

"Yes."

"Enormous nose."

"Do you know him?"

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

"Ay. The hostler, Cox."

There was a groan of horror and a cry for vengeance.

"Silence," said the magistrate. "Mr. Gardiner, you are a dying man. Words may kill. Be careful. Have you any doubts?"

"About what?"

"That the villain was Daniel Cox."

"None whatever."

At these words the men and women, who were glaring with pale faces and all their senses strained at the dying man and his faint yet terrible denunciation, broke into two bands; some remained rooted to the place, the rest hurried, with cries of vengeance, in search of Daniel Cox. They were met in the yard by two constables, and rushed first to the stables, not that they hoped to find him there. Of course he had absconded with his booty.

The stable door was ajar. They tore it open.

The gray dawn revealed Cox fast asleep on the straw in the first empty stall, and his bottle in the manger. His clothes were bloody, and the man was drunk. They pulled him, cursed him, struck him, and would have torn him in pieces, but the constables interfered, set him up against the rail, like timber, and searched his bosom, and found—a wound; then turned all his pockets inside out, amidst great expectation, and found—three halfpence and the key of the stable door.

CHAPTER II

They ransacked the straw, and all the premises, and found—nothing.

Then, to make him sober and get something out of him, they pumped upon his head till he was very nearly choked. However, it told on him. He gasped for breath awhile, and rolled his eyes, and then coolly asked them had they found the villain.

They shook their fists at him. "Ay, we have found the villain, red-handed."

"I mean him as prowls about these parts in my waistcoat, and drove his knife into me last night—wonder a

CHARLES READE

didn't kill me out of hand. Have ye found him amongst ye?"

This question met with a volley of jeers and execrations, and the constables pinioned him, and bundled him off in a cart to Bow Street, to wait examination.

Meantime two Bow Street runners came down with a warrant, and made a careful examination of the premises. The two keys were on the table. Mr. Gardiner's outer door was locked. There was no money either in his portmanteau or Captain Cowen's. Both pistols were found loaded, but no priming in the pan of the one that lay on the bed; the other was primed, but the bullets were above the powder.

Bradbury, one of the runners, took particular notice of all.

Outside, blood was traced from the stable to the garden wall, and under this wall, in the grass, a bloody knife was found belonging to the "Swan" Inn. There was one knife less in Mr. Gardiner's room than had been carried up to his supper.

Mr. Gardiner lingered till noon, but never spoke again.

The news spread swiftly, and Captain Cowen came home in the afternoon, very pale and shocked.

He had heard of a robbery and murder at the "Swan," and came to know more. The landlady told him all that had transpired, and that the villain Cox was in prison.

Cowen listened thoughtfully, and said: "Cox! No doubt he is a knave: but murder!—I should never have suspected him of that."

The landlady pooh-poohed his doubts. "Why, sir, the poor gentleman knew him, and wounded him in self-defence, and the rogue was found a-bleeding from that very wound, and my knife, as done the murder, not a stone's throw from him as done it, which it was that Dan Cox, and he'll swing for't, please God." Then, changing her tone, she said, solemnly, "You'll come and see him, sir?"

"Yes," said Cowen, resolutely, with scarce a moment's hesitation.

The landlady led the way, and took the keys out of her pocket, and opened Cowen's door. "We keep all locked," said she, half apologetically; "the magistrate bade us; and everything as we found it—God help us! There—look at

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

your portmanteau. I wish you may not have been robbed as well."

"No matter," said he.

"But it matters to me," said she, "for the credit of the house." Then she gave him the key of the inner door, and waved her hand toward it, and sat down and began to cry.

Cowen went in and saw the appalling sight. He returned quickly, looking like a ghost, and muttered, "This is a terrible business."

"It is a bad business for me and all," said she. "He have robbed you too, I'll go bail."

Captain Cowen examined his trunk carefully. "Nothing to speak of," said he. "I've lost eight guineas and my gold watch."

"There!—there!—there!" cried the landlady.

"What does that matter, dame? He has lost his life."

"Ay, poor soul. But 'twon't bring him back, you being robbed and all. Was ever such an unfortunate woman? Murder and robbery in my house! Travellers will shun it like a pest-house. And the new landlord he only wanted a good excuse to take it down altogether."

This was followed by more sobbing and crying. Cowen took her down-stairs into the bar, and comforted her. They had a glass of spirits together, and he encouraged the flow of her egotism, till at last she fully persuaded herself it was her calamity that one man was robbed and another murdered in her house.

Cowen, always a favorite, quite won her heart by falling into this view of the matter, and when he told her he must go back to the City again, for he had important business, and besides had no money left, either in his pockets or his rifled valise, she encouraged him to go, and said, kindly, indeed it was no place for him now; it was very good of him to come back at all: but both apartments should be scoured and made decent in a very few days; and a new carpet down in Mr. Gardiner's room.

So Cowen went back to the City, and left this notable woman to mop up her murder.

At Bow Street next morning, in answer to the evidence of his guilt, Cox told a tale which the magistrate said was

CHARLES READE

even more ridiculous than most of the stories uneducated criminals get up on such occasions; with this single comment he committed Cox for trial.

Everybody was of the magistrate's opinion, except a single Bow Street runner, the same who had already examined the premises. This man suspected Cox, but had one qualm of doubt founded on the place where he had discovered the knife, and the circumstance of the blood being traced from that place to the stable, and not from the inn to the stable, and on a remark Cox had made to him in the cart. "I don't belong to the house. I haan't got no keys to go in and out o' nights. And if I took a hatful of gold, I'd be off with it into another country—wouldn't you? Him as took the gentleman's money, he knew where 'twas, and he have got it: I didn't and I haan't."

Bradbury came down to the "Swan," and asked the landlady a question or two. She gave him short answers. He then told her that he wished to examine the wine that had come down from Mr. Gardiner's room.

The landlady looked him in the face, and said it had been drunk by the servants or thrown away long ago.

"I have my doubts of that," said he.

"And welcome," said she.

Then he wished to examine the keyholes.

"No," said she; "there has been prying enough into my house."

Said he angrily, "You are obstructing justice. It is very suspicious."

"It is you that is suspicious, and a mischief-maker into the bargain," said she. "How do I know what you might put into my wine and my keyholes, and say you found it? You are well known, you Bow Street runners, for your hanky-panky tricks. Have you got a search-warrant, to throw more discredit upon my house? No? Then pack! and learn the law before you teach it me."

Bradbury retired, bitterly indignant, and his indignation strengthened his faint doubt of Cox's guilt.

He set a friend to watch the "Swan," and he himself gave his mind to the whole case, and visited Cox in Newgate, three times before his trial.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

The next novelty was that legal assistance was provided for Cox by a person who expressed compassion for his poverty and inability to defend himself, guilty or not guilty; and that benevolent person was—Captain Cowen.

In due course Daniel Cox was arraigned at the bar of the Old Bailey for robbery and murder.

The deposition of the murdered man was put in by the Crown, and the witnesses sworn who heard it, and Captain Cowen was called to support a portion of it. He swore that he supped with the deceased and loaded one pistol for him while Mr. Gardiner loaded the other; lent him the key of his own door for further security, and himself slept in the City.

The judge asked him where, and he said, "13 Farringdon Street."

It was elicited from him that he had provided counsel for the prisoner.

His evidence was very short and to the point. It did not directly touch the accused, and the defendant's counsel—in spite of his client's eager desire—declined to cross-examine Captain Cowen. He thought a hostile examination of so respectable a witness, who brought nothing home to the accused, would only raise more indignation against his client.

The prosecution was strengthened by the reluctant evidence of Barbara Lamb. She deposed that three years ago Cox had been detected by her stealing money from a gentleman's table in the "Swan" Inn, and she gave the details.

The judge asked her whether this was at night.

"No, my lord; at about four of the clock. He is never in the house at night; the mistress can't abide him."

"Has he any key of the house?"

"Oh, dear, no, my lord."

The rest of the evidence for the Crown is virtually before the reader.

For the defence it was proved that the man was found drunk, with no money nor keys upon him, and that the knife was found under the wall, and the blood was traceable from the wall to the stable. Bradbury, who proved this, tried to get in about the wine; but this was stopped as irrelevant.

CHARLES READE

"There is only one person under suspicion," said the judge, rather sternly.

As counsel were not allowed in that day to make speeches to the jury, but only to examine and cross-examine and discuss points of law, Daniel Cox had to speak in his own defence.

"My lord," said he, "it was my double done it."

"Your what?" asked my lord, a little peevishly.

"My double. There's a rogue prowls about the 'Swan' at nights, which you couldn't tell him from me (Laughter.) You needn't to laugh me to the gallows. I tell ye he have got a nose like mine." (Laughter.)

Clerk of Arraignment. Keep silence in the court, on pain of imprisonment.

"And he have got a waistcoat the very spit of mine, and a tumble-down hat such as I do wear. I saw him go by and let hisself into the 'Swan' with a key, and I told Sam Pott next morning."

Judge. Who is Sam Pott?

Culprit. Why, my stable-boy, to be sure.

Judge. Is he in court?

Culprit. I don't know. Ay, there he is.

Judge. Then you'd better call him.

Culprit (shouting). Hy! Sam!

Sam. Here be I. (Loud laughter.)

The judge explained, calmly, that to call a witness meant to put him in the box and swear him, and that although it was irregular, yet he should allow Pott to be sworn, if it would do the prisoner any good.

Prisoner's counsel said he had no wish to swear Mr. Pott.

"Well, Mr. Gurney," said the judge, "I don't think he can do you any harm." Meaning in so desperate a case.

Thereupon Sam Pott was sworn, and deposed that Cox had told him about this double.

"When?"

"Often and often."

"Before the murder?"

"Long afore that."

Counsel for the Crown. Did you ever see this double?

"Not I."

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

Counsel. I thought not.

Daniel Cox went on to say that on the night of the murder he was up with a sick horse, and he saw his double let himself out of the inn the back way, and then turn round and close the door softly; so he slipped out to meet him. But the double saw him, and made for the garden wall. He ran up and caught him with one leg over the wall, and seized a black bag he was carrying off; the figure dropped it, and he heard a lot of money chink: that thereupon he cried "Thieves!" and seized the man; but immediately received a blow, and lost his senses for a time. When he came to, the man and the bags were both gone, and he felt so sick that he staggered to the stable and drank a pint of neat brandy, and he remembered no more till they pumped on him, and told him he had robbed and murdered a gentleman inside the "Swan" Inn. "What they can't tell me," said Daniel, beginning to shout, "is how I could know who has got money, and who hasn't, inside the 'Swan' Inn. I keeps the stables, not the inn: and where be my keys to open and shut the 'Swan'? I never had none. And where's the gentleman's money? 'Twas somebody in the inn as done it, for to have the money, and when you find the money, you'll find the man."

The prosecuting counsel ridiculed this defence, and inter alia asked the jury whether they thought it was a double the witness Lamb had caught robbing in the inn three years ago.

The judge summed up very closely, giving the evidence of every witness. What follows is a mere synopsis of his charge.

He showed it was beyond doubt that Mr. Gardiner returned to the inn with money, having collected his rents in Wiltshire; and this was known in the inn, and proved by several, and might have transpired in the yard or the tap-room. The unfortunate gentleman took Captain Cowen, a respectable person, his neighbor in the inn, into his confidence, and revealed his uneasiness. Captain Cowen swore that he supped with him, but could not stay all night, most unfortunately. But he encouraged him, left him his pistols, and helped him load them.

Then his lordship read the dying man's deposition. The

CHARLES READE

person thus solemnly denounced was found in the stable, bleeding from a recent wound, which seems to connect him at once with the deed as described by the dying man.

"But here," said my lord, "the chain is no longer perfect. A knife, taken from the 'Swan,' was found under the garden wall, and the first traces of blood commenced there, and continued to the stable, and were abundant on the straw and on the person of the accused. This was proved by the constable and others. No money was found on him, and no keys that could have opened any outer doors of the 'Swan' Inn. The accused had, however, three years before been guilty of a theft from a gentleman in the inn, which negatives his pretence that he always confined himself to the stables. It did not, however, appear that on the occasion of the theft he had unlocked any doors, or possessed the means. The witness for the Crown, Barbara Lamb, was clear on that.

"The prisoner's own solution of the mystery was not very credible. He said he had a double—or a person wearing his clothes and appearance; and he had seen this person prowling about long before the murder, and had spoken of the double to one Pott. Pott deposed that Cox had spoken of this double more than once; but admitted he never saw the double with his own eyes.

"This double, says the accused, on the fatal night let himself out of the 'Swan' Inn and escaped to the garden wall. There he (Cox) came up with this mysterious person, and a scuffle ensued in which a bag was dropped and gave the sound of coin; and then Cox held the man and cried 'Thieves!' but presently received a wound and fainted, and on recovering himself, staggered to the stables and drank a pint of brandy.

"The story sounds ridiculous, and there is no direct evidence to back it; but there is a circumstance that lends some color to it. There was one blood-stained instrument, and no more, found on the premises, and that knife answers to the description given by the dying man, and, indeed, may be taken to be the very knife missing from his room; and this knife was found under the garden wall, and there the blood commenced and was traced to the stable.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

"Here," said my lord, "to my mind, lies the defence. Look at the case on all sides, gentlemen: an undoubted murder done by hands; no suspicion resting on any known person but the prisoner—a man who had already robbed in the inn; a confident recognition by one whose deposition is legal evidence, but evidence we cannot cross-examine; and a recognition by moonlight only and in the heat of a struggle.

"If on this evidence, weakened not a little by the position of the knife and the traces of blood, and met by the prisoner's declaration, which accords with that single branch of the evidence, you have a doubt, it is your duty to give the prisoner the full benefit of that doubt, as I have endeavored to do; and if you have no doubt, why then you have only to support the law and protect the lives of peaceful citizens. Whoever has committed this crime, it certainly is an alarming circumstance that, in a public inn, surrounded by honest people, guarded by locked doors, and armed with pistols, a peaceful citizen can be robbed like this of his money and his life."

The jury saw a murder at an inn; an accused, who had already robbed in that inn, and was denounced as his murderer by the victim. The verdict seemed to them to be Cox, or impunity. They all slept at inns; a double they had never seen; undetected accomplices they had all heard of. They waited twenty minutes, and brought in their verdict—Guilty.

The judge put on his black cap, and condemned Daniel Cox to be hanged by the neck till he was dead.

CHAPTER III

After the trial was over, and the condemned man led back to prison to await his execution, Bradbury went straight to 13 Farringdon Street and inquired for Captain Cowen.

"No such name here," said the good woman of the house.

"But you keep lodgers?"

"Nay, we keep but one; and he is no captain—he is a City clerk."

"Well, madam, it is not idle curiosity, I assure you, but was not the lodger before him Captain Cowen?"

CHARLES READE

"Laws, no! it was a parson. Your rakehellly captains wouldn't suit the like of us. 'Twas a reverend clerk, a grave old gentleman. He wasn't very well-to-do, I think: his cassock was worn, but he paid his way."

"Keep late hours?"

"Not when he was in town; but he had a country cure."

"Then you have let him in after midnight."

"Nay, I keep no such hours. I lent him a pass-key. He came in and out from the country when he chose. I would have you to know he was an old man, and a sober man, and an honest man: I'd wager my life on that. And excuse me, sir, but who be you, that do catechise me so about my lodgers?"

"I am an officer, madam."

The simple woman turned pale, and clasped her hands. "An officer!" she cried. "Alack! what have I done now?"

"Why, nothing, madam," said the wily Bradbury. "An officer's business is to protect such as you, not to trouble you, for all the world. There, now, I'll tell you where the shoe pinches. This Captain Cowen has just sworn in a court of justice that he slept here on the 15th of last October."

"He never did, then. Our good parson had no acquaintances in the town. Not a soul ever visited him."

"Mother," said a young girl peeping in, "I think he knew somebody of that very name. He did ask me once to post a letter for him, and it was to some man of worship, and the name was Cowen, yes—Cowen 'twas. I'm sure of it. By the same token, he never gave me another letter, and that made me pay the more attention."

"Jane, you are too curious," said the mother.

"And I am very much obliged to you, my little maid," said the officer, "and also to you, madam," and so took his leave.

One evening, all of a sudden, Captain Cowen ordered a prime horse at the "Swan," strapped his valise on before him, and rode out of the yard post-haste: he went without drawing bridle to Clapham, and then looked round him, and, seeing no other horseman near, trotted gently round into the Borough, then into the City, and slept at an inn in

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

Holborn. He had bespoken a particular room beforehand,—a little room he frequented. He entered it with an air of anxiety. But this soon vanished after he had examined the floor carefully. His horse was ordered at five o'clock next morning. He took a glass of strong waters at the door to fortify his stomach, but breakfasted at Uxbridge, and fed his good horse. He dined at Beaconsfield, baited at Thame, and supped with his son at Oxford: next day paid all the young man's debts and spent a week with him.

His conduct was strange: boisterously gay and sullenly despondent by turns. During the week came an unexpected visitor, General Sir Robert Barrington. This officer was going out to America to fill an important office. He had something in view for young Cowen, and came to judge quietly of his capacity. But he did not say anything at that time, for fear of exciting hopes he might possibly disappoint.

However, he was much taken with the young man. Oxford had polished him. His modest reticence, until invited to speak, recommended him to older men, especially as his answers were judicious, when invited to give his opinion. The tutors also spoke very highly of him.

"You may well love that boy," said General Barrington to the father.

"God bless you for praising him!" said the other. "Ay, I love him too well."

Soon after the General left, Cowen changed some gold for notes, and took his departure for London, having first sent word of his return. He meant to start after breakfast and make one day of it, but he lingered with his son, and did not cross Magdalen Bridge till one o'clock.

This time he rode through Dorchester, Benson, and Henley, and, as it grew dark, resolved to sleep at Maidenhead.

Just after Hurley Bottom, at four cross-roads, three highwaymen spurred on him from right and left. "Your money or your life!"

He whipped a pistol out of his holster, and pulled at the nearest head in a moment.

The pistol missed fire. The next moment a blow from

CHARLES READE

the butt end of a horse-pistol dazed him, and he was dragged off his horse, and his valise emptied in a minute.

Before they had done with him, however, there was a clatter of hoofs, and the robbers sprang to their nags, and galloped away for the bare life as a troop of yeomanry rode up. The thing was so common, the newcomers read the situation at a glance, and some of the best mounted gave chase. The others attended to Captain Cowen, caught his horse, strapped on his valise, and took him with them into Maidenhead, his head aching, his heart sickening and raging by turns. All his gold gone, nothing left but a few one-pound notes that he had sewed into the lining of his coat.

He reached the "Swan" next day in a state of sullen despair. "A curse is on me," he said. "My pistol miss fire: my gold gone."

He was welcomed warmly. He stared with surprise. Barbara led the way to his old room, and opened it. He started back. "Not there," he said, with a shudder.

"Alack! Captain, we have kept it for you. Sure you are not afraid."

"No," said he, doggedly; "no hope, no fear."

She stared, but said nothing.

He had hardly got into the room when, click, a key was turned in the door of communication. "A traveller there!" said he. Then, bitterly, "Things are soon forgotten in an inn."

"Not by me," said Barbara solemnly. "But you know our dame, she can't let money go by her. 'Tis our best room, mostly, and nobody would use it that knows the place. He is a stranger. He is from the wars: will have it he is English, but talks foreign. He is civil enough when he is sober, but when he has got a drop he does maunder away to be sure, and sings such songs I never."

"How long has he been here?" asked Cowen.

"Five days, and the mistress hopes he will stay as many more, just to break the spell."

"He can stay or go," said Cowen. "I am in no humor for company. I have been robbed, girl."

"You robbed, sir? Not openly, I am sure."

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

"Openly—but by numbers—three of them. I should soon have sped one, but my pistol snapped fire just like his. There, leave me, girl; fate is against me, and a curse upon me. Bubbled out of my fortune in the City, robbed of my gold upon the road. To be honest is to be a fool."

He flung himself on the bed with a groan of anguish, and the ready tears ran down soft Barbara's cheeks. She had tact, however, in her humble way, and did not prattle to a strong man in a moment of wild distress. She just turned and cast a lingering glance of pity on him, and went to fetch him food and wine. She had often seen an unhappy man the better for eating and drinking.

When she was gone, he cursed himself for his weakness in letting her know his misfortunes. They would be all over the house soon. "Why, that fellow next door must have heard me bawl them out. I have lost my head," said he, "and I never needed it more."

Barbara returned with the cold powdered beef and carrots, and a bottle of wine she had paid for herself. She found him sullen, but composed. He made her solemnly promise not to mention his losses. She consented readily, and said, "You know I can hold my tongue."

When he had eaten and drunk, and felt stronger, he resolved to put a question to her. "How about that poor fellow?"

She looked puzzled a moment, then turned pale, and said solemnly, "'Tis for this day week, I hear. 'Twas to be last week, but the King did respite him for a fortnight."

"Ah! indeed! Do you know why?"

"No, indeed. In his place, I'd rather have been put out of the way at once; for they will surely hang him."

Now in our day the respite is very rare: a criminal is hanged or reprieved. But at the period of our story men were often respited for short or long periods, yet suffered at last. One poor wretch was respited for two years, yet executed. This respite, therefore, was nothing unusual, and Cowen, though he looked thoughtful, had no downright suspicion of anything so serious to himself as really lay beneath the surface of this not unusual occurrence.

I shall, however, let the reader know more about it. The

CHARLES READE

judge in reporting the case notified to the proper authority that he desired His Majesty to know he was not entirely at ease about the verdict. There was a lacuna in the evidence against this prisoner. He stated the flaw in a very few words. But he did not suggest any remedy.

Now the public clamored for the man's execution, that travellers might be safe. The King's adviser thought that if the judge had serious doubts, it was his business to tell the jury so. The order for execution issued.

Three days after this the judge received a letter from Bradbury, which I give verbatim.

THE KING vs. COX

"My Lord,—Forgive my writing to you in a case of blood. There is no other way. Daniel Cox was not defended. Counsel went against his wish, and would not throw suspicion on any other. That made it Cox or nobody. But there was a man in the inn whose conduct was suspicious. He furnished the wine that made the victim sleepy—and I must tell you the landlady would not let me see the remnant of the wine. She did everything to baffle me and defeat justice—he loaded two pistols so that neither could go off. He has got a pass-key, and goes in and out of the 'Swan' at all hours. He provided counsel for Daniel Cox. That could only be through compunction.

"He swore in court that he slept that night at 13 Farringdon Street. Your lordship will find it on your notes. For 'twas you put the question, and methinks Heaven inspired you. An hour after the trial I was at 13 Farringdon Street. No Cowen and no captain had ever lodged there nor slept there. Present lodger, a City clerk; lodger at date of murder, an old clergyman that said he had a country cure, and got the simple body to trust him with a pass-key: so he came in and out at all hours of the night. This man was no clerk, but, as I believe, the cracksman that did the job at the 'Swan.'

"My lord, there is always two in a job of this sort—the professional man and the confederate. Cowen was the confederate, hoccussed the wine, loaded the pistols, and lent his

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

pass-key to the cracksman. The cracksman opened the other door with his tools, unless Cowen made him duplicate keys. Neither of them intended violence, or they would have used their own weapons. The wine was drugged expressly to make that needless. The cracksman, instead of a black mask, put on a calf-skin waistcoat and a bottle-nose, and that passed muster for Cox by moonlight; it puzzled Cox by moonlight, and deceived Gardiner by moonlight.

"For the love of God get me a respite for the innocent man, and I will undertake to bring the crime home to the cracksman and to his confederate Cowen."

Bradbury signed this with his name and quality.

The judge was not sorry to see the doubt his own wariness had raised so powerfully confirmed. He sent this missive on to the minister, with the remark that he had received a letter which ought not to have been sent to him, but to those in whose hands the prisoner's fate rested. He thought it his duty, however, to transcribe from his notes the question he had put to Captain Cowen, and his reply that he had slept at 13 Farringdon Street on the night of the murder, and also the substance of the prisoner's defence, with the remark that, as stated by that uneducated person, it had appeared ridiculous; but that after studying this Bow Street officer's statements, and assuming them to be in the main correct, it did not appear ridiculous, but only remarkable, and it reconciled all the undisputed facts, whereas that Cox was the murderer was and ever must remain irreconcilable with the position of the knife and the track of the blood.

Bradbury's letter and the above comment found their way to the King, and he granted what was asked—a respite.

Bradbury and his fellows went to work to find the old clergyman, alias cracksman. But he had melted away without a trace, and they got no other clew. But during Cowen's absence they got a traveller, i. e., a disguised agent, into the inn, who found relics of wax in the key-holes of Cowen's outer door and of the door of communication.

Bradbury sent this information in two letters, one to the judge, and one to the minister.

But this did not advance him much. He had long been

CHARLES READE

sure that Cowen was in it. It was the professional hand, the actual robber and murderer, he wanted.

The days succeeded one another: nothing was done. He lamented, too late, he had not applied for a reprieve, or even a pardon. He deplored his own presumption in assuming that he could unravel such a mystery entirely. His busy brain schemed night and day; he lost his sleep, and even his appetite. At last, in sheer despair, he proposed to himself a new solution, and acted upon it in the dark and with consummate subtlety; for he said to himself: "I am in deeper water than I thought. Lord, how they skim a case at the Old Bailey! They take a pond for a puddle, and go to fathom it with a forefinger."

Captain Cowen sank into a settled gloom; but he no longer courted solitude; it gave him the horrors. He preferred to be in company, though he no longer shone in it. He made acquaintance with his neighbor, and rather liked him. The man had been in the Commissariat Department, and seemed half surprised at the honor a captain did him in conversing with him. But he was well versed in all the incidents of the late wars, and Cowen was glad to go with him into the past; for the present was dead, and the future horrible.

This Mr. Cutler, so deferential when sober, was inclined to be more familiar when in his cups, and that generally ended in his singing and talking to himself in his own room in the absurdest way. He never went out without a black leather case strapped across his back like a despatch-box. When joked and asked as to the contents, he used to say, "Papers, papers," curtly.

One evening, being rather the worse for liquor, he dropped it, and there was a metallic sound. This was immediately commented on by the wags of the company.

"That fell heavy for paper," said one.

"And there was a ring," said another.

"Come, unload thy pack, comrade, and show us thy papers."

Cutler was sobered in a moment, and looked scared. Cowen observed this, and quietly left the room. He went up-stairs to his own room, and, mounting on a chair, he

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

found a thin place in the partition and made an eyelet-hole.

That very night he made use of this with good effect. Cutler came up to bed, singing and whistling, but presently threw down something heavy, and was silent. Cowen spied, and saw him kneel down, draw from his bosom a key suspended round his neck by a ribbon, and open the despatch-box. There were papers in it, but only to deaden the sound of a great many new guineas that glittered in the light of the candle, and seemed to fire, and fill the receptacle.

Cutler looked furtively round, plunged his hands in them, took them out by handfuls, admired them, kissed them, and seemed to worship them, locked them up again, and put the black case under his pillow.

While they were glaring in 'the light, Cowen's eyes flashed with unholy fire. He clutched his hands at them where he stood, but they were inaccessible. He sat down despondent, and cursed the injustice of fate. Bubbled out of money in the City; robbed on the road; but when another had money, it was safe; he left his keys in the locks of both doors, and his gold never quitted him.

Not long after this discovery he got a letter from his son, telling him that the college bill for battels, or commons, had come in, and he was unable to pay it; he begged his father to disburse it, or he should lose credit.

This tormented the unhappy father, and the proximity of gold tantalized him so that he bought a phial of laudanum, and secreted it about his person.

"Better die," said he, "and leave my boy to Barrington. Such a legacy from his dead comrade will be sacred, and he has the world at his feet."

He even ordered a bottle of red port and kept it by him to swill the laudanum in, and so get drunk and die.

But when it came to the point he faltered.

Meantime the day drew near for the execution of Daniel Cox. Bradbury had undertaken too much; his cracksman seemed to the King's advisers as shadowy as the double of Daniel Cox.

The evening before that fatal day Cowen came to a wild resolution; he would go to Tyburn at noon, which was the

CHARLES READE

hour fixed, and would die under that man's gibbet—so was this powerful mind unhinged.

This desperate idea was uppermost in his mind when he went up to his bedroom.

But he resisted. No, he would never play the coward while there was a chance left on the cards; while there is life there is hope. He seized the bottle, uncorked it, and tossed off a glass. It was potent and tingled through his veins and warmed his heart.

He set the bottle down before him. He filled another glass; but before he put it to his lips jocund noises were heard coming up the stairs, and noisy, drunken voices, and two boon companions of his neighbor Cutler—who had a double-bedded room opposite him—parted with him for the night. He was not drunk enough, it seems, for he kept demanding "t'other bottle." His friends, however, were of a different opinion; they bundled him into his room and locked him in from the other side, and shortly after burst into their own room, and were more garrulous than articulate.

Cutler, thus disposed of, kept saying and shouting and whining that he must have "t'other bottle." In short, any one at a distance would have thought he was announcing sixteen different propositions, so various were the accents of anger, grief, expostulation, deprecation, supplication, imprecation, and whining tenderness in which he declared he must have "t'other bo'l."

At last he came bump against the door of communication. "Neighbor," said he, "your wuship, I mean, great man of war."

"Well, sir?"

"Let's have t'other bo'l."

Cowen's eyes flashed; he took out his phial of laudanum and emptied about a fifth part of it into the bottle. Cutler whined at the door, "Do open the door, your wuship, and let's have t'other (hic)."

"Why, the key is on your side."

A feeble-minded laugh at the discovery, a fumbling with the key, and the door opened, and Cutler stood in the doorway, with his cravat disgracefully loose and his visage

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

wreathed in foolish smiles. His eyes goggled; he pointed with a mixture of surprise and low cunning at the table. "Why, there is t'other bo'l! Let's have'm."

"Nay," said Cowen, "I drain no bottles at this time; one glass suffices me. I drink your health." He raised his glass.

Cutler grabbed the bottle and said, brutally, "And I'll drink yours!" and shut the door with a slam, but was too intent on his prize to lock it.

Cowen sat and listened.

He heard the wine gurgles, and the drunkard draw a long breath of delight.

Then there was a pause; then a snatch of song, rather melodious and more articulate than Mr. Cutler's recent attempts at discourse.

Then another gurgle and another loud "Ah!"

Then a vocal attempt, which broke down by degrees.

Then a snore.

Then a somnolent remark—"All right!"

Then a staggering on to his feet. Then a swaying to and fro, and a subsiding against the door.

Then by and by a little reel at the bed and a fall flat on the floor.

Then stertorous breathing.

Cowen sat still at the keyhole some time, then took off his boots and softly mounted his chair, and applied his eye to the peep-hole.

Cutler was lying on his stomach between the table and the bed.

Cowen came to the door on tiptoe and turned the handle gently; the door yielded.

He lost nerve for the first time in his life. What horrible shame, should the man come to his senses and see him!

He stepped back into his own room, ripped up his port-manteau, and took out, from between the leather and the lining, a disguise and a mask. He put them on.

Then he took his loaded cane; for he thought to himself, "No more stabbing in that room," and he crept through the door like a cat.

The man lay breathing stertorously, and his lips blowing out at every exhalation like lifeless lips urged by a strong

CHARLES READE

wind, so that Cowen began to fear, not that he might wake, but that he might die.

It flashed across him he should have to leave England.

What he came to do seemed now wonderfully easy; he took the key by its ribbon carefully off the sleeper's neck, unlocked the despatch-box, took off his hat, put the gold into it, locked the despatch-box, replaced the key, took up his hatful of money, and retired slowly on tiptoe as he came.

He had but deposited his stick and the booty on the bed, when the sham drunkard pinned him from behind, and uttered a shrill whistle. With a fierce snarl Cowen whirled his captor round like a feather, and dashed with him against the post of his own door, stunning the man so that he relaxed his hold, and Cowen whirled him round again, and kicked him in the stomach so felly that he was doubled up out of the way, and contributed nothing more to the struggle except his last meal. At this very moment two Bow Street runners rushed madly upon Cowen through the door of communication. He met one in full career with a blow so tremendous that it sounded through the house, and drove him all across the room against the window, where he fell down senseless; the other he struck rather short, and though the blood spurted and the man staggered, he was on him again in a moment, and pinned him. Cowen, a master of pugilism, got his head under his left shoulder, and pommelled him cruelly; but the fellow managed to hold on, till a powerful foot kicked in the door at a blow, and Bradbury himself sprang on Captain Cowen with all the fury of a tiger; he seized him by the throat from behind, and throttled him, and set his knee to his back; the other, though mauled and bleeding, whipped out a short rope, and pinioned him in a turn of the hand. Then all stood panting but the disabled men, and once more the passage and the room were filled with pale faces and panting bosoms.

Lights flashed on the scene, and instantly loud screams from the landlady and her maids, and as they screamed they pointed with trembling fingers.

And well they might. There—caught red-handed in an act of robbery and violence, a few steps from the place of

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

the mysterious murder, stood the stately figure of Captain Cowen and the mottled face and bottle nose of Daniel Cox condemned to die in just twelve hours' time.

CHAPTER IV

"Ay, scream, ye fools," roared Bradbury, "that couldn't see a church by daylight." Then, shaking his fist at Cowen, "Thou villain! 'Tisn't one man you have murdered, 'tis two. But please God I'll save one of them yet, and hang you in his place. Way, there! not a moment to lose."

In another minute they were all in the yard, and a hackney-coach sent for.

Captain Cowen said to Bradbury, "This thing on my face is choking me."

"Oh, better than you have been choked—at Tyburn and all."

"Hang me. Don't pillory me. I've served my country."

Bradbury removed the wax mask. He said afterward he had no power to refuse the villain, he was so grand and gentle.

"Thank you, sir. Now, what can I do for you? Save Daniel Cox?"

"Ay, do that, and I'll forgive you."

"Give me a sheet of paper."

Bradbury, impressed by the man's tone of sincerity, took him into the bar, and getting all his men round him, placed paper and ink before him.

He addressed to General Barrington, in attendance on His Majesty, these:—

General,—See His Majesty betimes, tell him from me that Daniel Cox, condemned to die at noon, is innocent, and get him a reprieve. O Barrington, come to your lost comrade. The bearer will tell you where I am. I cannot.

EDWARD COWEN.

"Send a man you can trust to Windsor with that, and take me to my most welcome death."

CHARLES READE

A trusty officer was despatched to Windsor, and in about an hour Cowen was lodged in Newgate.

All that night Bradbury labored to save the man that was condemned to die. He knocked up the sheriff of Middlesex, and told him all.

"Don't come to me," said the sheriff; "go to the minister."

He rode to the minister's house. The minister was up. His wife gave a ball—windows blazing, shadows dancing—music—lights. Night turned into day. Bradbury knocked. The door flew open, and revealed a line of bedizened footmen, dotted at intervals up the stairs.

"I must see my lord. Life or death. I'm an officer from Bow Street."

"You can't see my lord. He is entertaining the Proosian Ambassador and his sweet."

"I must see him, or an innocent man will die to-morrow. Tell him so. Here's a guinea."

"Is there? Step aside here."

He waited in torments till the message went through the gamut of lackeys, and got, more or less mutilated, to the minister.

He detached a buffer, who proposed to Mr. Bradbury to call at the Do-little office in Westminster next morning.

"No," said Bradbury, "I don't leave the house till I see him. Innocent blood shall not be spilled for want of a word in time."

The buffer retired, and in came a duffer who said the occasion was not convenient.

"Ay, but it is," said Bradbury, "and if my lord is not here in five minutes, I'll go up-stairs and tell my tale before them all, and see if they are all hair-dressers' dummies, without heart or conscience or sense."

In five minutes in came a gentleman, with an order on his breast, and said, "You are a Bow Street officer?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Name?"

"Bradbury."

"You say the man condemned to die to-morrow is innocent?"

"Yes, my lord."

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

"How do you know?"

"Just taken the real culprit."

"When is the other to suffer?"

"Twelve to-morrow."

"Seems short time. Humph! Will you be good enough to take a line to the sheriff? Formal message to-morrow." The actual message ran:—

"Delay execution of Cox till we hear from Windsor. Bearer will give reasons."

With this Bradbury hurried away, not to the sheriff, but to the prison; and infected the jailor and the chaplain and all the turnkeys with pity for the condemned, and the spirit of delay.

Bradbury breakfasted, and washed his face, and off to the sheriff. Sheriff was gone out. Bradbury hunted him from pillar to post, and could find him nowhere. He was at last obliged to go and wait for him at Newgate.

He arrived at the stroke of twelve to superintend the execution. Bradbury put the minister's note into his hand.

"This is no use," said he. "I want an order from His Majesty, or the Privy Council at least."

"Not to delay," suggested the chaplain. "You have all the day for it."

"All the day! I can't be all the day hanging a single man. My time is precious, gentlemen." Then, his bark being worse than his bite, he said, "I shall come again at four o'clock, and then, if there is no news from Windsor, the law must take its course."

He never came again, though, for, even as he turned his back to retire, there was a faint cry from the farthest part of the crowd, a paper raised on a hussar's lance, and as the mob fell back on every side, a royal aide-de-camp rode up, followed closely by the mounted runner, and delivered to the sheriff a reprieve under the sign-manual of His Majesty George the First.

At 2 P.M. of the same day Gen. Sir Robert Barrington reached Newgate, and saw Captain Cowen in private. That unhappy man fell on his knees and made a confession.

Barrington was horrified, and turned as cold as ice to

CHARLES READE

him. He stood erect as a statue. "A soldier to rob!" said he. "Murder was bad enough—but to rob!"

Cowen, with his head and hands all hanging down, could only say, faintly, "I have been robbed and ruined, and it was for my boy. Ah, me! what will become of him? I have lost my soul for him, and now he will be ruined and disgraced—by me, who would have died for him." The strong man shook with agony, and his head and hands almost touched the ground.

Sir Robert Barrington looked at him and pondered.

"No," said he, relenting a little, "that is the one thing I can do for you. I had made up my mind to take your son to Canada as my secretary, and I will take him. But he must change his name. I sail next Thursday."

The broken man stared wildly; then started up and blessed him; and from that moment the wild hope entered his breast that he might keep his son unstained by his crime, and even ignorant of it.

Barrington said that was impossible; but yielded to the father's prayers, and consented to act as if it was possible. He would send a messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions to bring the young man up and put him on board the ship at Gravesend.

This difficult scheme once conceived, there was not a moment to be lost. Barrington sent down a mounted messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions.

Cowen sent for Bradbury, and asked him when he was to appear at Bow Street.

"To-morrow, I suppose."

"Do me a favor. Get all your witnesses; make the case complete, and show me only once to the public before I am tried."

"Well, Captain," said Bradbury, "you were square with me about poor Cox. I don't see as it matters much to you; but I'll not say you nay." He saw the solicitor for the Crown, and asked a few days to collect all his evidence. The functionary named Friday.

This was conveyed next day to Cowen, and put him in a fever; it gave him a chance of keeping his son ignorant, but no certainty. Ships were eternally detained at Graves-

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

end waiting for a wind; there were no steam-tugs then to draw them into blue water. Even going down the Channel, letters boarded them if the wind slacked. He walked his room to and fro, like a caged tiger, day and night.

Wednesday evening Barrington came with the news that his son was at the "Star" in Cornhill. "I have got him to bed," said he, "and, Lord forgive me, I have let him think he will see you before we go down to Gravesend to-morrow."

"Then let me see him," said the miserable father. "He shall know nought from me."

They applied to the jailer, and urged that he could be a prisoner all the time, surrounded by constables in disguise. No; the jailer would not risk his place and an indictment. Bradbury was sent for, and made light of the responsibility. "I brought him here," said he, "and I will take him to the 'Star,' I and my fellows. Indeed, he will give us no trouble this time. Why, that would blow the gaff, and make the young gentleman fly to the whole thing."

"It can only be done by authority," was the jailer's reply.

"Then by authority it shall be done," said Sir Robert. "Mr. Bradbury, have three men here with a coach at one o'clock, and a regiment, if you like, to watch the 'Star.'"

Punctually at one came Barrington with an authority. It was a request from the Queen. The jailer took it respectfully. It was an authority not worth a button; but he knew he could not lose his place, with this writing to brandish at need.

The father and son dined with the General at the "Star." Bradbury and one of his fellows waited as private servants; other officers, in plain clothes, watched back and front.

At three o'clock father and son parted, the son with many tears, the father with dry eyes, but a voice that trembled as he blessed him.

Young Cowen, now Morris, went down to Gravesend with his chief; the criminal back to Newgate, respectfully bowed from the door of the "Star" by landlord and waiters.

At first he was comparatively calm, but as the night advanced became restless, and by and by began to pace his cell again like a caged lion.

CHARLES READE

At twenty minutes past eleven a turnkey brought him a line; a horseman had galloped in with it from Gravesend.

"A fair wind—we weigh anchor at the full tide. It is a merchant vessel, and the Captain under my orders to keep off shore and take no messages. Farewell. Turn to the God you have forgotten. He alone can pardon you."

On receiving this note, Cowen betook him to his knees.

In this attitude the jailer found him when he went his round.

He waited till the Captain rose, and then let him know that an able lawyer was in waiting, instructed to defend him at Bow Street next morning. The truth is, the females of the "Swan" had clubbed money for this purpose.

Cowen declined to see him. "I thank you, sir," said he, "I will defend myself."

He said, however, he had a little favor to ask.

"I have been," said he, "of late much agitated and fatigued, and a sore trial awaits me in the morning. A few hours of unbroken sleep would be a boon to me."

"The turnkeys must come in to see you are all right."

"It is their duty; but I will lie in sight of the door if they will be good enough not to wake me."

"There can be no objection to that, Captain, and I am glad to see you calmer."

"Thank you; never calmer in my life."

He got his pillow, set two chairs, and composed himself to sleep. He put the candle on the table, that the turnkeys might peep through the door and see him.

Once or twice they peeped in very softly, and saw him sleeping in the full light of the candle, to moderate which, apparently, he had thrown a white handkerchief over his face.

At nine in the morning they brought him his breakfast, as he must be at Bow Street between ten and eleven.

When they came so near him, it struck them he lay too still.

They took off the handkerchief.

He had been dead some hours.

Yes, there, calm, grave, and noble, incapable, as it seemed, either of the passions that had destroyed him or the tender

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

affection which redeemed yet inspired his crimes, lay the corpse of Edward Cowen.

Thus miserably perished a man in whom were many elements of greatness.

He left what little money he had to Bradbury, in a note imploring him to keep particulars out of the journals, for his son's sake; and such was the influence on Bradbury of the scene at the "Star," the man's dead face, and his dying words, that, though public detail was his interest, nothing transpired but that the gentleman who had been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the murder at the "Swan" Inn had committed suicide: to which was added by another hand: "Cox, however, has the King's pardon, and the affair still remains shrouded with mystery."

Cox was permitted to see the body of Cowen, and, whether the features had gone back to youth, or his own brain, long sobered in earnest, had enlightened his memory, recognized him as a man he had seen committed for horse-stealing at Ipswich, when he himself was the mayor's groom; but some girl lent the accused a file, and he cut his way out of the cage.

Cox's calamity was his greatest blessing. He went into Newgate scarcely knowing there was a God; he came out thoroughly enlightened in that respect by the teaching of the chaplain and the death of Cowen. He went in a drunkard; the noose that dangled over his head so long terrified him into life-long sobriety—for he laid all the blame on liquor—and he came out as bitter a foe to drink as drink had been to him.

His case excited sympathy; a considerable sum was subscribed to set him up in trade. He became a horse-dealer on a small scale: but he was really a most excellent judge of horses, and, being sober, enlarged his business; horsed a coach or two; attended fairs, and eventually made a fortune by dealing in cavalry horses under government contracts.

As his money increased, his nose diminished, and when he died, old and regretted, only a pink tinge revealed the habits of his earlier life.

Mrs. Martha Cust and Barbara Lamb were no longer

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

sure, but they doubted to their dying day the innocence of the ugly fellow, and the guilt of the handsome, civil-spoken gentleman.

But they converted nobody to their opinion; for they gave their reasons.

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD
BY RUDYARD KIPLING

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

By RUDYARD KIPLING

I

ALL day I had followed at the heels of a pursuing army, engaged on one of the finest battles that ever camp of exercise beheld. Thirty thousand troops had by the wisdom of the government of India been turned loose over a few thousand square miles of country to practice in peace what they would never attempt in war. The Army of the South had finally pierced the center of the Army of the North, and was pouring through the gap, hot-foot, to capture a city of strategic importance. Its front extended fanwise, the sticks being represented by regiments strung out along the line of route backward to the divisional transport columns, and all the lumber that trails behind an army on the move. On its right the broken left of the Army of the North was flying in mass, chased by the Southern horse and hammered by the Southern guns, till these had been pushed far beyond the limits of their last support. Then the flying Army of the North sat down to rest, while the commandant of the pursuing force telegraphed that he held it in check and observation.

Unluckily he did not observe that three miles to his right flank a flying column of Northern horse, with a detachment of Goorkhas and British troops, had been pushed round, as fast as the falling light allowed, to cut across the entire rear of the Southern Army, to break, as it were, all the ribs of the fan where they converged, by striking at the transport reserve, ammunition, and artillery supplies. Their instructions were to go in, avoiding the few scouts who might not have been drawn off by the pursuit, and create sufficient excitement to impress the Southern Army with the wisdom of guarding their own flank and rear before they captured cities. It was a pretty maneuver, neatly carried out.

RUDYARD KIPLING

Speaking for the second division of the Southern Army, our first intimation of it was at twilight, when the artillery were laboring in deep sand, most of the escort were trying to help them out, and the main body of the infantry had gone on. A Noah's ark of elephants, camels, and the mixed menagerie of an Indian transport train bubbled and squealed behind the guns, when there rose up from nowhere in particular British infantry to the extent of three companies, who sprang to the heads of the gun-horses, and brought all to a standstill amid oaths and cheers.

"How's that, umpire?" said the major commanding the attack, and with one voice the drivers and limber gunners answered, "Hout!" while the colonel of artillery sputtered.

"All your scouts are charging our main body," said the major. "Your flanks are unprotected for two miles. I think we've broken the back of this division. And listen! there go the Goorkhas!"

A weak fire broke from the rear-guard more than a mile away, and was answered by cheerful howlings. The Goorkhas, who should have swung clear of the second division, had stepped on its tail in the dark, but, drawing off, hastened to reach the next line, which lay almost parallel to us, five or six miles away.

Our column swayed and surged irresolutely—three batteries, the divisional ammunition reserve, the baggage, and a section of hospital and bearer corps. The commandant ruefully promised to report himself "cut up" to the nearest umpire, and commending his cavalry and all other cavalry to the care of Eblis, toiled on to resume touch with the rest of the division.

"We'll bivouac here to-night," said the major. "I have a notion that the Ghoorkhas will get caught. They may want us to reform on. Stand easy till the transport gets away."

A hand caught my beast's bridle and led him out of the choking dust; a larger hand deftly canted me out of the saddle, and two of the hugest hands in the world received me sliding. Pleasant is the lot of the special correspondent who falls into such hands as those of Privates Mulvaney, Ortheris, and Learoyd.

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

"An' that's all right," said the Irishman, calmly. "We thought we'd find you somewheres here by. Is there anything of yours in the transport? Orth'ris'll fetch ut out."

Ortheris did "fetch ut out" from under the trunk of an elephant in the shape of a servant and an animal, both laden with medical comforts. The little man's eyes sparkled.

"If the brutal an' licentious soldiery av these parts gets sight av the thruck," said Mulvaney, making practiced investigation, "they'll loot ev'rything. They're bein' fed on iron-filin's an' dog biscuit these days, but glory's no compensation for a bellyache. Praise be, we're here to protect you, sorr. Beer, sausage, bread (soft, an' that's a curiosity), soup in a tin, whisky by the smell av ut, an' fowls. Mother av Moses, but ye take the field like a confectioner! 'Tis scand'lus."

"'Ere's a orficer," said Ortheris, significantly. "When the sergent's done lushin', the privit may clean the pot."

I bundled several things into Mulvaney's haversack before the major's hand fell on my shoulder, and he said, tenderly: "Requisitioned for the queen's service. Wolseley was quite wrong about special correspondents. They are the best friends of the soldier. Come an' take pot-luck with us to-night."

And so it happened amid laughter and shoutings that my well-considered commissariat melted away to reappear on the mess-table, which was a water-proof sheet spread on the ground. The flying column had taken three days' rations with it, and there be few things nastier than government rations—especially when government is experimenting with German toys. Erbswurst, tinned beef, of surpassing tinniness, compressed vegetables, and meat biscuits may be nourishing, but what Thomas Atkins wants is bulk in his inside. The major, assisted by his brother officers, purchased goats for the camp, and so made the experiment of no effect. Long before the fatigue-party sent to collect brushwood had returned, the men were settled down by their valises, kettles and pots had appeared from the surrounding country, and were dangling over fires as the kid and the compressed vegetables bubbled together; there rose a cheerful clinking of mess tins, outrageous demands for a "little more stuffin' with

RUDYARD KIPLING

that there liver wing," and gust on gust of chaff as pointed as a bayonet and as delicate as a gun-butt.

"The boys are in a good temper," said the major. "They'll be singing presently. Well, a night like this is enough to keep them happy."

Over our heads burned the wonderful Indian stars, which are not all pricked in on one plane, but preserving an orderly perspective, draw the eye through the velvet darkness of the void up to the barred doors of heaven itself. The earth was a gray shadow more unreal than the sky. We could hear her breathing lightly in the pauses between the howling of the jackals, the movement of the wind in the tamarisks, and the fitful mutter of musketry fire leagues away to the left. A native woman in some unseen hut began to sing, the mail train thundered past on its way to Delhi, and a roosting crow cawed drowsily. Then there was a belt-loosening silence about the fires, and the even breathing of the crowded earth took up the story.

The men, full fed, turned to tobacco and song—their officers with them. Happy is the subaltern who can win the approval of the musical critics in his regiment, and is honored among the more intricate step dancers. By him, as by him who plays cricket craftily, will Thomas Atkins stand in time of need when he will let a better officer go on alone. The ruined tombs of forgotten Mussulman saints heard the ballad of "Agra Town," "The Buffalo Battery," "Marching to Cabul," "The long, long Indian Day," "The Place Where the Punkah Coolie Died," and that crashing chorus which announces

"Youth's daring spirit, manhood's fire,
Firm hand, and eagle eye
Must he acquire who would aspire
To see the gray bear die."

To-day, of all those jovial thieves who appropriated my commissariat, and lay and laughed round that water-proof sheet, not one remains. They went to camps that were not of exercise, and battles without umpires. Burma, the Soudan, and the frontier fever and fight took them in their time.

I drifted across to the men's fires in search of Mulvaney,

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

whom I found greasing his feet by the blaze. There is nothing particularly lovely in the sight of a private thus engaged after a long day's march, but when you reflect on the exact proportion of the "might, majesty, dominion, and power" of the British Empire that stands on those feet, you take an interest in the proceedings.

"There's a blister—bad luck to ut!—on the heel," said Mulvaney. "I can't touch it. Prick ut out, little man."

Ortheris produced his housewife, eased the trouble with a needle, stabbed Mulvaney in the calf with the same weapon, and was incontinently kicked into the fire.

"I've bruk the best av my toes over you, ye grinnin' child av disruption!" said Mulvaney, sitting cross-legged and nursing his feet; then, seeing me: "Oh, ut's you, sorr! Be welkim, an' take that maraudin' scut's place. Jock, hould him down on the cindhers for a bit."

But Ortheris escaped and went elsewhere as I took possession of the hollow he had scraped for himself and lined with his greatcoat. Learoyd, on the other side of the fire, grinned affably, and in a minute fell fast asleep.

"There's the height av politeness for you," said Mulvaney, lighting his pipe with a flaming branch. "But Jock's eaten half a box av your sardines at wan gulp, an' I think the tin too. What's the best wid you, sorr; an' how did you happen to be on the losin' side this day when we captured you?"

"The Army of the South is winning all along the line," I said.

"Thin that line's the hangman's rope, savin' your presence. You'll learn to-morrow how we retreated to dhraw thim on before we made thim trouble, an' that's what a woman does. By the same token, we'll be attacked before the dawnin', an' ut would be betther not to slip your boots. How do I know that? By the light av pure reason. Here are three companies av us ever so far inside av the enemy's flank, an' a crowd av roarin', t'arin', an' squealin' cavalry gone on just to turn out the whole nest av thim. Av course the enemy will pursue by brigades like as not, an' then we'll have to run for ut. Mark my words. I am av the opinion av Polonius, whin he said: 'Don't fight wid ivry scut for the pure joy av fightin'; but if you do, knock the nose av him

RUDYARD KIPLING

first an' frequent!' We ought to ha' gone on an' helped the Goorkhas."

"But what do you know about Polonius?" I demanded. This was a new side of Mulvaney's character.

"All that Shakespeare ever wrote, an' a dale more that the gallery shouted," said the man of war, carefully lacing his boots. "Did I not tell you av Silver's Theater in Dublin whin I was younger than I am now, an' a patron av the drama? Ould Silver wud never pay actor, man or woman, their just dues, an' by consequence his comp'nies was col-lapsible at the last minut. Then the bhoys would clamor to take a part, an' oft as not ould Silver made them pay for the fun. Faith, I've seen Hamlut played wid a new black eye, an' the queen as full as a cornucopia. I remember wanst Hogin, that 'listed in the Black Tyrone an' was shot in South Africa, he sejuiced ould Silver into givin' him Hamlut's part instid av me, that had a fine fancy for rhetoric in those days. Av course I wint into the gallery an' began to fill the pit wid other people's hats, an' I passed the time av day to Hogin walkin' through Denmark like a hamstrung mule wid a pall on his back. 'Hamlut,' sez I, 'there's a hole in your heel. Pull up your shtockin's, Hamlut,' sez I. 'Hamlut, Hamlut, for the love av decincy, dhrop that skull, an' pull up your shtockin's.' The whole house began to tell him that. He stopped his soliloquishms mid between. 'My shtockin's may be comin' down, or they may not,' sez he, screwin' his eye into the gallery, for well he knew who I was; 'but afther the performince is over, me an' the Ghost'll trample the guts out av you, Terence, wid your ass's bray.' An' that's how I come to know about Hamlut. Eyah! Those days, those days! Did you iver have onendin' devilmint, an' nothin' to pay for it in your life, sorr?"

"Never without having to pay," I said.

"That's thrue. 'Tis mane, whin you considher on ut; but ut's the same wid horse or fut. A headache if you dhrink, an' a bellyache if you eat too much, an' a heartache to kape all down. Faith, the beast only gets the colic, an' he's the lucky man."

He dropped his head and stared into the fire, fingering his mustache the while. From the far side of the bivouac

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

the voice of Corbet-Nolan, senior subaltern of B Company, uplifted itself in an ancient and much-appreciated song of sentiment, the men moaning melodiously behind him:

"The north wind blew coldly, she dropped from
that hour,
My own little Kathleen, my sweet little Kathleen,
Kathleen, my Kathleen, Kathleen O'Moore!"

with forty-five o's in the last word. Even at that distance you might have cut the soft South Irish accent with a shovel.

"For all we take we must pay; but the price is cruel high," murmured Mulvaney when the chorus had ceased.

"What's the trouble?" I said gently, for I knew that he was a man of an inextinguishable sorrow.

"Hear now," said he. "Ye know what I am now. I know what I mint to be at the beginnin' av my service. I've tould you time an' again, an' what I have not, Dinah Shadd has. An' what am I? Oh, Mary Mother av Hiven! an ould dhrunken, untrustable baste av a privit that has seen the regiment change out from colonel to drummer-boy, not wanst or twict, but scores av times. Ay, scores! An' me not so near gettin' promotion as in the furst. An' me livin' on an' kapin' clear o' clink not by my own good conduct, but the kindness av some orf'cer-bhoy young enough to be son to me! Do I not know ut? Can I not tell whin I'm passed over at p'rade, tho' I'm rockin' full av liquor an' ready to fall all in wan piece, such as even a suckin' child might see, bekase, 'Oh, 'tis only ould Mulvaney!' An' whin I'm let off in the ord'ly-room, through some thrick av the tongue an' a ready answer an' the ould man's mercy, is ut smilin' I feel whin I fall away an' go back to Dinah Shadd, thryin' to carry ut all off as a joke? Not I. 'Tis hell to me—dumb hell through ut all; an' next time whin the fit comes I will be as bad again. Good cause the reg'ment has to know me for the best soldier in ut. Better cause have I to know meself for the worst man. I'm only fit to tache the new drafts what I'll never learn myself; an' I am sure as tho' I heard ut, that the minut wan av these pink-eyed recruits gets away from my 'Mind ye now,' an' 'Listen to this, Jim, bhoy,' sure I am that the sergint holds me up to him for a warnin'. So I tache, as they say at musketry instruction, by direct an'

RUDYARD KIPLING

ricochet fire. Lord be good to me! for I have stud some trouble."

"Lie down and go to sleep," said I, not being able to comfort or advise. "You're the best man in the regiment, and, next to Ortheris, the biggest fool. Lie down, and wait till we're attacked. What force will they turn out? Guns, think you?"

"Thry that wid your lorrds an' ladies, twistin' an' turnin' the talk, tho' you mint ut well. Ye cud say nothin' to help me, an' yet ye never knew what cause I had to be what I am."

"Begin at the beginning and go on to the end," I said, royally. "But rake up the fire a bit first." I passed Ortheris' bayonet for a poker.

"That shows how little you know what to do," said Mulvaney, putting it aside. "Fire takes all the heart out av the steel, an' the next time, maybe, that our little man is fightin' for his life his bradawl'll break, an' so you'll 'ave killed him, m'anin' no more than to kape yourself warm. 'Tis a recruity's thrick that. Pass the cl'anin'-rod, sorr."

I snuggled down, abashed, and after an interval the low, even voice of Mulvaney began.

II

"Did I ever tell you how Dinah Shadd came to be wife av mine?"

I dissembled a burning anxiety that I had felt for some months—ever since Dinah Shadd, the strong, the patient, and the infinitely tender, had, of her own good love and free will, washed a shirt for me, moving in a barren land where washing was not.

"I can't remember," I said, casually. "Was it before or after you made love to Annie Bragin, and got no satisfaction?"

The story of Annie Bragin is written in another place. It is one of the many episodes in Mulvaney's checkered career.

"Before—before—long before was that business av Annie Bragin an' the corp'rill's ghost. Never woman was the

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

worse for me whin I had married Dinah. There's a time for all things, an' I know how to kape all things in place—barrin' the dhrink, that kapes me in my place, wid no hope av comin' to be aught else."

"Begin at the beginning," I insisted. "Mrs. Mulvaney told me that you married her when you were quartered in Krab Bokhar barracks."

"An' the same is a cess-pit," said Mulvaney, piously. "She spoke thrue, did Dinah. 'Twas this way. Talkin' av that, have ye iver fallen in love, sorr?"

I preserved the silence of the damned. Mulvaney continued:

"Thin I will assume that ye have not. I did. In the days av my youth, as I have more than wanst told you, I was a man that filled the eye an' delighted the sowl av women. Niver man was hated as I have been. Niver man was loved as I—no, not within half a day's march av ut. For the first five years av my service, whin I was what I wud give my sowl to be now, I tuk whatever was widin my reach, an' digested ut, an' that's more than most men can say. Dhrink I tuk, an' ut did me no harm. By the hollow av hiven, I could play wid four women at wanst, an' kape thim from findin' out anything about the other three, and smile like a full-blown marigold through ut all. Dick Coulhan, of the battery we'll have down on us to-night, could dhrive his team no better than I mine; an' I hild the worser cattle. An' so I lived an' so I was happy, till afther that business wid Annie Bragin—she that turned me off as cool as a meat-safe, an' taught me where I stud 't the mind av an honest woman. 'Twas no sweet dose to take.

"Afther that I sickened a while an' tuk thought to my reg'mental work, conceiting mesilf I wud study an' be a sargint, an' a major-gineral twinty minutes afther that. But on top o' my ambitiousness there was an empty place in my sowl, an' me own opinion av mesilf cud not fill ut. Sez I to mesilf: 'Terence, you're a great man an' the best set up in the reg'ment. Go on an' get promotion.' Sez mesilf to me, 'What for?' Sez I to mesilf, 'For the glory av ut.' Sez mesilf to me, 'Will that fill these two strong arrums av yours, Terence?' 'Go to the devil,' sez I to mesilf. 'Go to the

RUDYARD KIPLING

married lines,' sez meself to me. "'Tis the same thing,' sez I to meself. 'Av you're the same man, ut is,' said meself to me. An' wid that I considhered on ut a long while. Did you iver feel that way, sorr?"

I snored gently, knowing that if Mulvaney were uninterrupted he would go on. The clamor from the bivouac fires beat up to the stars as the rival singers of the companies were pitted against each other.

"So I felt that way, an' a bad time ut was. Wanst, bein' a fool, I went into the married lines, more for the sake av speakin' to our ould color-sergint Shadd than for any thruck wid wimmen-folk. I was a corp'rill then—rejuiced afterwards; but a corp'rill then. I've got a photograft av meself to prove ut. 'You'll take a cup av tay wid us?' sez he. 'I will that,' I sez; 'tho' tay is not my divarsion.' "'Twud be better for you if ut were,' sez ould Mother Shadd. An' she had ought to know, for Shadd, in the ind av his service, dhrank bung-full each night.

"Wid that I tuk off my gloves—there was pipe-clay in thim so that they stud alone—an' pulled up my chair, lookin' round at the china ornamentals an' bits av things in the Shadds' quarters. They were things that belonged to a woman, an' no camp kit, here to-day an' dishipated next. 'You're comfortable in this place, sergint,' sez I. "'Tis the wife that did ut, boy,' sez he, pointin' the stem av his pipe to ould Mother Shadd, an' she smacked the top av his bald head upon the compliment. 'That manes you want money,' sez she.

"An' thin—an' thin whin the kittle was to be filled, Dinah came in—my Dinah—her sleeves rowled up to the elbow, an' her hair in a gowlden glory over her forehead, the big blue eyes beneath twinklin' like stars on a frosty night, an' the tread of her two feet lighter than waste paper from the colonel's basket in ord'ly-room when ut's emptied. Bein' but a shlip av a girl, she went pink at seein' me, an' I twisted me mustache an' looked at a picture forminst the wall. Never show a woman that ye care the snap av a finger for her, an', begad, she'll come bleatin' to your boot heels."

"I suppose that's why you followed Annie Bragin till everybody in the married quarters laughed at you," said I,

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

remembering that unhallowed wooing, and casting off the disguise of drowsiness.

"I'm layin' down the ginerall theory av the attack," said Mulvaney, driving his foot into the dying fire. "If you read the 'Soldier's Pocket-Book,' which never any soldier reads, you'll see that there are exceptions. When Dinah was out av the door (an' 'twas as tho' the sunlight had gone too), 'Mother av Hiven, sergint!' sez I, 'but is that your daughter?' 'I've believed that way these eighteen years,' sez ould Shadd, his eyes twinklin'. 'But Mrs. Shadd has her own opinion, like ivry other woman.' "'Tis wid yours this time, for a mericle,' sez Mother Shadd. 'Then why, in the name av fortune, did I never see her before?' sez I. 'Bekaze you've been thraipsin' round wid the married women these three years past. She was a bit av a child till last year, an' she shot up wid the spring,' sez ould Mother Shadd. 'I'll thraipse no more,' sez I. 'D'you mane that?' sez ould Mother Shadd, lookin' at me sideways, like a hen looks at a hawk whin the chickens are runnin' free. 'Try me, an' tell,' sez I. Wid that I pulled on my gloves, dhrank off the tea, an' wint out av the house as stiff as at ginerall p'rade, for well I knew that Dinah Shadd's eyes were in the small av my back out av the scullery window. Faith, that was the only time I mourned I was not a cav'lryman, for the sake av the spurs to jingle.

"I wint out to think, an' I did a powerful lot av thinkin', but ut all came round to that shlip av a girl in the dotted blue dhress, wid the blue eyes an' the sparkil in them. Thin I kept off canteen, an' I kept to the married quarters or near by on the chanst av meetin' Dinah. Did I meet her? Oh, my time past, did I not, wid a lump in my throat as big as my valise, an' my heart goin' like a farrier's forge on a Saturday mornin'! 'Twas 'Good-day to ye, Miss Dinah,' an' 'Good-day t'you, corp'ril,' for a week or two, an' divil a bit further could I get, bekase av the respect I had to that girl that I cud ha' broken betune finger an' thumb."

Here I giggled as I recalled the gigantic figure of Dinah Shadd when she handed me my shirt.

"Ye may laugh," grunted Mulvaney. "But I'm speakin' the trut', an' 'tis you that are in fault. Dinah was a girl

RUDYARD KIPLING

that wud ha' taken the imperiousness out av the Duchess av Clonmel in those days. Flower hand, foot av shod air, an' the eyes av the mornin' she had. That is my wife to-day—ould Dinah, an' never aught else than Dinah Shadd to me.

"'Twas after three weeks standin' off an' on, an' niver makin' headway excipt through the eyes, that a little drummer-boy grinned in me face whin I had admonished him wid the buckle av my belt for riotin' all over the place. 'An' I'm not the only wan that doesn't kape to barricks,' sez he. I tuk him by the scruff av his neck—my heart was hung on a hair trigger those days, you will understand—an' 'Out wid ut,' sez I, 'or I'll lave no bone av you unbruk.' 'Speak to Dempsey,' sez he, howlin'. 'Dempsey which,' sez I, 'ye unwashed limb av Satan?' 'Of the Bobtailed Dhragoons,' sez he. 'He's seen her home from her aunt's house in the civil lines four times this fortnight.' 'Child, sez I, dhrop-pin' him, 'your tongue's stronger than your body. Go to your quarters. I'm sorry I dhressed you down.'

"At that I wint four ways to wanst huntin' Dempsey. I was mad to think that wid all my airs among women I shud ha' been ch'ated by a basin-faced fool av a cav'lryman not fit to trust on a mule thrunk. Presintly I found him in our lines—the Bobtails was quartered next us—an' a tallowy, top-heavy son av a she-mule he was, wid his big brass spurs an' his plastrons on his epigastons an' all. But he niver flinched a hair.

"'A word wid you, Dempsey,' sez I. 'You've walked wid Dinah Shadd four times this fortnight gone.'

"'What's that to you?' sez he. 'I'll walk forty times more, an' forty on top av that, ye shovel-futted, clod-breakin' infantry lance-corp'ril.'

"Before I cud gyard, he had his gloved fist home on me cheek, an' down I went full sprawl. 'Will that content you?' sez he, blowin' on his knuckles for all the world like a Scots Grays orf'cer. 'Content?' sez I. 'For your own sake, man, take off your spurs, peel your jackut, and onglove. 'Tis the beginnin' av the overture. Stand up!'

"He stud all he knew, but he niver peeled his jackut, an' his shoulders had no fair play. I was fightin' for Dinah Shadd an' that cut on me cheek. What hope had he forninst

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

me? 'Stand up!' sez I, time an' again, when he was beginnin' to quarter the ground an' gyard high an' go large. 'This isn't ridin'-school,' sez I. 'Oh, man, stand up, an' let me get at ye!' But whin I saw he wud be runnin' about, I grup his shtock in me left an' his waist-belt in me right, an' swung him clear to me right front, head undher, he hammerin' me nose till the wind was knocked out av him on the bare ground. 'Stand up,' sez I, 'or I'll kick your head into your chest.' An' I wud ha' done ut, too, so ragin' mad I was.

"'Me collar-bone's bruk,' sez he. 'Help me back to lines. I'll walk wid her no more.' So I helped him back."

"And was his collar-bone broken?" I asked, for I fancied that only Learoyd could neatly accomplish that terrible throw.

"He pitched on his left shoulder-point. It was. Next day the news was in both barracks; an' whin I met Dinah Shadd wid a cheek like all the reg'mintal tailors' samples, there was no 'Good-mornin', corp'ril,' or aught else. 'An' what have I done, Miss Shadd,' sez I, very bould, plantin' meself forninst her, 'that ye should not pass the time of day?'

"'Ye've half killed rough-rider Dempsey,' sez she, her dear blue eyes fillin' up.

"'Maybe,' sez I. 'Was he a friend av yours that saw ye home four times in a fortnight?'

"'Yes,' sez she, very bould; but her mouth was down at the corners. 'An'—an' what's that to you?'

"'Ask Dempsey,' sez I, purtendin' to go away.

"'Did you fight for me then, ye silly man?' she sez, tho' she knew ut all along.

"'Who else?' sez I; an' I tuk wan pace to the front.

"'I wasn't worth ut,' sez she, fingerin' her apron.

"'That's for me to say,' sez I. 'Shall I say ut?'

"'Yes,' sez she, in a saint's whisper; an' at that I explained meself; an' she tould me what ivry man that is a man, an' many that is a woman, hears wanst in his life.

"'But what made ye cry at startin', Dinah, darlin'?' sez I.

"'Your—your bloody cheek,' sez she, duckin' her little head down on my sash (I was duty for the day), an' whimperin' like a sorrowful angel.

RUDYARD KIPLING

"Now, a man cud take that two ways. I tuk ut as pleased me best, an' my first kiss wid it. Mother av innocence! but I kissed her on the tip av the nose an' undher the eye, an' a girl that lets a kiss come tumbleways like that has never been kissed before. Take note av that, sorr. Thin we wint, hand in hand, to ould Mother Shadd, like two little childher, an' she said it was no bad thing; an' ould Shadd nodded behind his pipe, an' Dinah ran away to her own room. That day I throd on rollin' clouds. All earth was too small to hould me. Begad, I cud ha' picked the sun out av the sky for a live coal to me pipe, so magnificent I was. But I tuk recruits at squad-drill, an' began with general battalion advance whin I shud ha' been balance-steppin' 'em. Eyah! that day! that day!"

A very long pause. "Well?" said I.

"It was all wrong," said Mulvaney, with an enormous sigh. "An' sure I know that ev'ry bit av ut was me own foolishness. That night I tuk maybe the half av three pints—not enough to turn the hair of a man in his natural sinses. But I was more than half dhrunk wid pure joy, an' that canteen beer was so much whisky to me. I can't tell how ut came about, but bekase I had no thought for any wan except Dinah, bekase I hadn't slipped her little white arms from me neck five minutes, bekase the breath av her kiss was not gone from my mouth, I must go through the married lines on me way to quarters, an' I must stay talkin' to a red-headed Mullengar heifer av a girl, Judy Sheehy, that was daughter to Mother Sheehy, the wife av Nick Sheehy, the canteen sergint—the black curse av Shielygh be on the whole brood that are above groun' this day!"

"An' what are ye houldin' your head that high for, corp'ril?" sez Judy. 'Come in an' thry a cup av tay,' she sez, standin' in the doorway.

"Bein' an onbustable fool, an' thinkin' av anythin' but tay, I wint.

"Mother's at canteen,' sez Judy, smoothin' the hair av hers that was like red snakes, an' lookin' at me corner-ways out av her green cat's eyes. 'Ye will not mind, corp'ril?"

"I can endure,' sez I. 'Ould Mother Sheehy bein' no divarsion av mine, nor her daughter too.' Judy fetched the

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

tea-things an' put thim on the table, leanin' over me very close to get them square. I dhrew back, thinkin' of Dinah.

"Is ut afraid you are av a girl alone?" sez Judy.

"No," sez I. "Why should I be?"

"That rests wid the girl," sez Judy, dhrawin' her chair next to mine.

"Thin there let ut rest," sez I; an' thinkin' I'd been a trifle onpolite, I sez, "The tay's not quite sweet enough for me taste. Put your little finger in the cup, Judy; 'twill make ut nechthar."

"What's nechthar?" sez she.

"Somethin' very sweet," sez I; an' for the sinful life av me I cud not help lookin' at her out av the corner av my eye, as I was used to look at a woman.

"Go on wid ye, corp'ril," sez she. "You're a flirt."

"On me sowl I'm not," sez I.

"Then you're a cruel handsome man, an' that's worse," sez she, heavin' big sighs an' lookin' crossways.

"You know your own mind," sez I.

"'Twud be better for me if I did not," she sez.

"There's a dale to be said on both sides av that," sez I, not thinkin'.

"Say your own part av ut, then, Terence, darlin'," sez she; 'for begad I'm thinkin' I've said too much or too little for an honest girl;' an' wid that she put her arms round me neck an' kissed me.

"There's no more to be said afther that," sez I, kissin' her back again. Oh, the mane scut that I was, my head ringin' wid Dinah Shadd! How does ut come about, sorr, that whin a man has put the comether on wan woman he's sure bound to put ut on another? 'Tis the same thing at musketry. Wan day ev'ry shot goes wide or into the bank, an' the next—lay high, lay low, sight or snap—ye can't get off the bull's-eye for ten shots runnin'."

"That only happens to a man who has had a good deal of experience; he does it without thinking," I replied.

"Thankin' you for the compliment, sorr, ut may be so; but I'm doubtin' whether you mint ut for a compliment. Hear, now. I sat there wid Judy on my knee, tellin' me all manner av nonsense, an' only sayin' 'yes' an' 'no,' when I'd

RUDYARD KIPLING

much better ha' kept tongue betune teeth. An' that was not an hour afther I had left Dinah. What I was thinkin' av I cannot say.

Presently, quiet as a cat, ould Mother Sheehy came in velvet-dhrunk. She had her daughter's red hair, but 'twas bald in patches, an' I cud see in her wicked ould face, clear as lightnin', what Judy wud be twenty year to come. I was for jumpin' up, but Judy niver moved.

"Terence has promust, mother," sez she, an' the cowlid sweat bruk out all over me.

"Ould Mother Sheehy sat down of a heap, an' began playin' wid the cups. 'Thin you're a well-matched pair,' she sez, very thick; 'for he's the biggest rogue that iver spoiled the queen's shoe-leather, an'—'

"I'm off, Judy," sez I. 'Ye should not talk nonsinse to your mother. Get her to bed, girl.'

"'Nonsinse?' sez the ould woman, prickin' up her ears like a cat, an' grippin' the table-edge. "'Twill be the most nonsinsical nonsinse for you, ye grinnin' badger, if nonsinse 'tis. Git clear, you. I'm goin' to bed.'

"I ran out into the dhark, me head in a stew an' me heart sick, but I had sinse enough to see that I'd brought ut all on meself. 'It's this to pass the time av day to a pan-jandhrum of hell-cats,' sez I. 'What I've said an' what I've not said do not matther. Judy an' her dam will hould me for a promust man, an' Dinah will give me the go, an' I deserve ut. I will go an' get dhrunk,' sez I, 'an' forgit about ut, for 'tis plain I'm not a marryin' man.'

"On me way to canteen I ran against Lascelles, color-sergint that was av E Comp'ny—a hard, hard man, wid a tormint av a wife. 'You've the head av a drowned man on your shoulders,' sez he, 'an' you're goin' where you'll get a worse wan. Come back,' sez he. 'Let me go,' sez I. 'I've thrown me luck over the wall wid me own hand.' 'Then that's not the way to get ut back,' sez he. 'Have out wid your throuble, ye fool-bhoy.' An' I tould him how the matther was.

"He sucked his lower lip. 'You've been thrapped,' sez he. 'Ju Sheehy wud be the betther for a man's name to hers as soon as she can. An' ye thought ye'd put the

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

comether on her. That's the naturil vanity av the basts. Terence, you're a big born fool, but you're not bad enough to marry into that comp'ny. If you said anythin', an' for all your protestations I'm sure you did—or did not, which is worse—eat ut all. Lie like the father av all lies, but come out av ut free av Judy. Do I not know what ut is to marry a woman that was the very spit av Judy when she was young? I'm gettin' ould, an' I've larnt patience; but you, Terence, you'd raise hand on Judy an' kill her in a year. Never mind if Dinah gives you the go; you've desarved ut. Never mind if the whole reg'mint laughs at you all day. Get shut av Judy an' her mother. They can't dhrag you to church, but if they do, they'll dhrag you to hell. Go back to your quarthers an' lie down,' sez he. Thin, over his shoulder, 'You must ha' done with thim.'

"Nixt day I wint to see Dinah; but there was no tucker in me as I walked. I knew the throuble wud come soon enough widout any handlin' av mine, an' I dreaded ut sore.

"I heard Judy callin' me, but I hild straight on to the Shadds' quarthers, an' Dinah wud ha' kissed me, but I hild her back.

"'Whin all's said, darlin',' sez I, 'you can give ut me if you will, tho' I misdoubt 'twill be so easy to come by thin.'

"I had scarce begun to put the explanation into shape before Judy an' her mother came to the door. I think there was a veranda, but I'm forgettin'.

"'Will ye not step in?' sez Dinah, pretty and polite, though the Shadds had no dealin's with the Sheehys. Ould Mother Shadd looked up quick, an' she was the fust to see the throuble, for Dinah was her daughter.

"'I'm pressed for time to-day,' sez Judy, as bould as brass; 'an' I've only come for Terence—my promust man. 'Tis strange to find him here the day ather the day.'

"Dinah looked at me as though I had hit her, an' I answered straight:

"'There was some nonsinse last night at the Sheehys' quarthers, an' Judy's carryin' on the joke, darlin',' sez I.

"'At the Sheehys' quarthers?' sez Dinah, very slow; an' Judy cut in wid:

"'He was there from nine till tin, Dinah Shadd, an' the

RUDYARD KIPLING

betther half av that time I was sittin' on his knee, Dinah Shadd. Ye may look an' ye may look an' ye may look me up an' down, but ye won't look away that Terence is my promust man. Terence, darlin', 'tis time for us to be comin' home.'

"Dinah Shadd never said a word to Judy. 'Ye left me at half-past eight,' sez she to me, 'an' I never thought that ye'd leave me for Judy, promises or no promises. Go back wid her, you that have to be fetched by a girl! I'm done with you,' sez she; and she ran into her own room, her mother followin'. So I was alone with those two women, and at liberty to spake me sintiments.

"'Judy Sheehy,' sez I, 'if you made a fool av me betune the lights, you shall not do ut in the day. I never promised you words or lines.'

"'You lie!' sez ould Mother Sheehy; 'an' may ut choke you where you stand!' She was far gone in dhrink.

"'An' tho' ut choked me where I stud I'd not change,' sez I. 'Go home, Judy. I take shame for a decent girl like you dhraggin' your mother out bareheaded on this errand. Hear, now, and have ut for an answer. I gave me word to Dinah Shadd yesterday, an' more blame to me I was with you last night talkin' nonsense, but nothin' more. You've chosen to thry to hould me on ut. I will not be held thereby for anythin' in the world. Is that enough?'

"Judy wint pink all over. 'An' I wish you joy av the perjury,' sez she. 'You've lost a woman that would ha' wore her hand to the bone for your pleasure; an' 'deed, Terence, ye were not thrapped.' . . . Lascelles must ha' spoken plain to her. 'I am as such as Dinah is—'deed I am! Ye've lost a fool av a girl that'll never look at you again, an' ye've lost what ye niver had—your common honesty. If you manage your men as you manage your love-makin', small wondher they call you the worst corp'ril in the comp'ny. Come away, mother,' sez she.

"But devil a fut would the ould woman budge! 'D'you hould by that?' sez she, peerin' up under her thick gray eyebrows.

"'Ay, an' wud,' said I, 'Tho' Dinah gave me the go twinty times. I'll have no thruck with you or yours,' sez I. 'Take your child away, ye shameless woman!'

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

"'An' am I shameless' sez she, bringin' her hands up above her head. 'Thin what are you, ye lyin', schamin', weak-kneed, dhirty-souled son of a sutler? Am I shameless? Who put the open shame on me an' my child that we shud go beggin' though the lines in daylight for the broken word of a man? Double portion of my shame be on you, Terence Mulvaney, that think yourself so strong! By Mary and the saints, by blood and water, an' by ivry sorrow that came into the world since the beginnin', the black blight fall on you and yours, so that you may niver be free from pain for another when ut's not your own! May your heart bleed in your breast drop by drop wid all your friends laughin' at the bleedin'! Strong you think yourself? May your strength be a curse to you to dhrive you into the devil's hands against your own will! Clear-eyed you are? May your eyes see clear ivry step av the dark path you take till the hot cinders av hell put thim out! May the ragin' dry thirst in my own ould bones go to you, that you shall never pass bottle full nor glass empty! God preserve the light av your understandin' to you, my jewel av a bhoy, that ye may niver forget what you mint to be an' do, when you're wallowin' in the muok! May ye see the betther and follow the worse as long as there's breath in your body, an' may ye die quick in a strange land, watchin' your death before ut takes you, an' onable to stir hand or fut!'

"I heard a scufflin' in the room behind, and thin Dinah Shadd's hand dhropped into mine like a roseleaf into a muddy road.

"'The half av that I'll take,' sez she, 'an' more too, if I can. Go home, ye silly-talkin' woman—go home an' confess.'

"'Come away! Come away!' sez Judy, pullin' her mother by the shawl. 'Twas none av Terence's fault. For the love av Mary, stop the talkin'!'

"'An' you!' said ould Mother Sheehy, spinnin' round forninst Dinah. 'Will ye take the half av that man's load? Stand off from him, Dinah Shadd, before he takes you down too—you that look to be a quarthermaster-sergint's wife in five years. Ye look too high, child. Ye shall wash for the quarthermaster-sergint, whin he pl'ases to give you the job out av charity; but a privit's wife ye shall be to the end, an'

RUDYARD KIPLING

ivry sorrow of a privit's wife ye shall know, an' niver a joy but wan, that shall go from you like the tide from a rock. The pain of bearin' ye shall know, but niver the pleasure of givin' the breast; an' you shall put away a man-child into the common ground wid niver a priest to say a prayer over him, an' on that man-child ye shall think ivry day av your life. Think long, Dinah Shadd, for you'll niver have another tho' you pray till your knees are bleedin'. The mothers av children shall mock you behind your back whin you're wringin' over the wash-tub. You shall know what ut is to take a dhrunken husband home an' see him go to the gyard-room. Will that pl'ase you, Dinah Shadd, that won't be seen talkin' to my daughter? You shall talk to worse than Judy before all's over. The sergint's wives shall look down on you, contemptuous daughter av a sergint, an' you shall cover ut all up wid a smilin' face whin your heart's burstin'. Stand aff him, Dinah Shadd, for I've put the Black Curse of Shielygh upon him, an' his own mouth shall make ut good.'

"She pitched forward on her head an' began foam'in' at the mouth. Dinah Shadd ran out with water, an' Judy dhragged the ould woman into the veranda till she sat up.

"'I'm old an' forlorn,' she sez, tremblin' an' cryin', 'an' 'tis like I say a dale more than I mane.'

"'When you're able to walk—go,' says ould Mother Shadd. 'This house has no place for the likes av you, that have cursed my daughter.'

"'Eyah!' said the ould woman. 'Hard words break no bones, an' Dinah Shadd'll kape the love av her husband till my bones are green corn. Judy, darlin', I misremember what I came here for. Can you lend us the bottom av a taycup av tay, Mrs. Shadd?'

"But Judy dhragged her off, cryin' as tho' her heart wud break. An' Dinah Shadd an' I, in ten minutes we had forgot ut all."

"Then why do you remember it now?" said I.

"Is ut like I'd forgit? Ivry word that wicked ould woman spoke fell throe in my life afterward; an' I cud ha' stud ut all—stud ut all, except fwheh little Shadd was born. That was on the line av march three months after the regiment was taken wid cholera. We were betune Umballa an' Kalka

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

thin, an' I was on picket. When I came off, the women showed me the child, an' ut turned on uts side an' died as I looked. We buried him by the road, an' Father Victory was a day's march behind with the heavy baggage, so the comp'ny captain read prayer. An' since then I've been a childless man, an' all else that ould Mother Sheehy put upon me an' Dinah Shadd. What do you think, sorr?"

I thought a good deal, but it seemed better then to reach out for Mulvaney's hand. This demonstration nearly cost me the use of three fingers. Whatever he knows of his weaknesses, Mulvaney is entirely ignorant of his strength.

"But what do you think?" he insisted, as I was straightening out the crushed members.

My reply was drowned in yells and outcries from the next fire, where ten men were shouting for "Orth'ris!" "Privit Orth'ris!" "Mistah Or-ther-is!" "Deah Boy!" Cap'n Orth'ris!" "Field-Marshal Orth'ris!" "Stanley, you pen-n'orth o' pop, come 'ere to your own comp'ny!" And the Cockney, who had been delighting another audience with recondite and Rabelaisian yarns, was shot down among his admirers by the major force.

"You've crumpled my dress-shirt 'orrid," said he; "an' I shan't sing no more to this 'ere bloomin' drawin'-room."

Learoyd, roused by the confusion, uncoiled himself, crept behind Ortheris, and raised him aloft on his shoulders.

"Sing, ye bloomin' hummin'-bird!" said he; and Ortheris, beating time on Learoyd's skull, delivered himself, in the raucous voice of the Ratcliffe Highway, of the following chaste and touching ditty:

"My girl she give me the go oncet,
When I was a London lad,
An' I went on the drunk for a fortnight,
An' then I went to the bad.
The queen she gave me a shillin',
To fight for 'er over the seas;
But guv'ment built me a fever trap,
An' Injia gave me disease.

Chorus—"Ho! don't you 'eed what a girl says,
An' don't you go for the beer;
But I was an ass when I was at grass,
An' that is why I'm 'ere.

RUDYARD KIPLING

"I fired a shot at an Afghan;
The beggar 'e fired again;
An' I lay on my bed with a 'ole in my 'ead,
An' missed the next campaign!
I up with my gun at a Burman
Who carried a bloomin' *dah*,
But the cartridge stuck an' the bay'nit bruk
An' all I got was the scar.

Chorus—"Ho! don't you aim at a Afghan
When you stand on the sky-line clear;
An' don't you go for a Burman
If none o' your friends is near.

"I served my time for a corp'ral,
An' wetted my stripes with pop,
For I went on the bend with a intimate friend,
An' finished the night in the shop.
I served my time for a sergeant;
The colonel 'e ses No!
The most you'll be is a full C. B.¹
An'—very next night 'twas so.

Chorus—"Ho! don't you go for a corp'ral
Unless your 'ead is clear;
But I was an ass when I was at grass,
An' that is why I am 'ere.

"I've tasted the luck 'o the army
In barrack 'an camp 'an clink,
And I lost my tip through the bloomin' trip
Along 'o the women an' drink,
I'm down at the heel o' my service,
An' when I am laid on the shelf,
My very wust friend from beginning to end,
By the blood of a mouse, was myself.

Chorus—"Ho! don't you 'eed what a girl says,
An' don't go for the beer;
But I was an ass when I was at grass,
An' that is why I'm 'ere."

"Ay, listen to our little man now, singin' and shoutin' as
tho' trouble had never touched him! D'ye remember when
he went mad with the homesickness?" said Mulvaney, re-
calling a never-to-be-forgotten season when Ortheris waded

¹ Confined to barracks.

THE COURTING OF DINAH SHADD

through the deep waters of affliction and behaved abominably. "But he's talkin' the bitter truth, tho'. Eyah!

" 'My very worst friend from beginning to end,
By the blood of a mouse, was meself.'"

Hark out!" he continued, jumping to his feet. "What did I tell you, sorr?"

Ft!l! spttl! whttl! went the rifles of the picket in the darkness, and we heard their feet rushing toward us as Ortheris tumbled past me and into his greatcoat. It is an impressive thing, even in peace, to see an armed camp spring to life with clatter of accouterments, click of Martini levers, and blood-curdling speculations as to the fate of missing boots. "Pickets dhriven in," said Mulvaney, staring like a buck at bay into the soft, slinging gloom. "Stand by an' kape close to us. If 'tis cav'lry, they may blundher into the fires."

Tr—ra ra! ta—ra—la! sung the thrice-blessed bugle, and the rush to form square began. There is much rest and peace in the heart of a square if you arrive in time and are not trodden upon too frequently. The smell of leather belts, fatigue uniform, and unpacked humanity is comforting.

A dull grumble, that seemed to come from every point of the compass at once, struck our listening ears, and little thrills of excitement ran down the faces of the square. Those who write so learnedly about judging distance by sound should hear cavalry on the move at night. A high-pitched yell on the left told us that the disturbers were friends—the cavalry of the attack, who had missed their direction in the darkness, and were feeling blindly for some sort of support and camping-ground. The difficulty explained, they jingled on.

"Double pickets out there; by your arms lie down and sleep the rest," said the major, and the square melted away as the men scrambled for their places by the fires.

When I woke I saw Mulvaney, the night-dew gemming his mustache, leaning on his rifle at picket, lonely as Prometheus on his rock, with I know not what vultures tearing his liver.

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

BY R. L. STEVENSON

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

By R. L. STEVENSON

DENIS DE BEAULIEU was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the treetops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that

R. L. STEVENSON

it was already long past midnight before he said good-by upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Chateau Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end or tail, of Chateau Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clew to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him further from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall with either hand, when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn; but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoiter. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighborhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiring but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran the

R. L. STEVENSON

faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armor, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defense. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and resolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason—perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humor to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a molding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? he wondered. Why was it open? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and underhand about all this that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was, prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silent without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak—as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening toward the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man laboring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a hand-rail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smothering violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom

R. L. STEVENSON

step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Maletroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar; something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full, as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and mustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Maletroit hand was famous. It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded in his lap like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intense and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Maletroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

"Pray step in," said the Sire de Maletroit. "I have been expecting you all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

"I fear," he said, "that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, "here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

"Your door . . ." he began.

"About my door?" asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. "A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. "A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; and when it touches our honor, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this countryside. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only—"

"My young friend," interrupted the other, "you will per-

R. L. STEVENSON

mit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment," he added with a leer, "but time will show which of us is in the right."

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

"Sir," he said, "if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword."

The Sire de Maletroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

"My dear nephew," he said, "sit down."

"Nephew!" retorted Denis, "you lie in your throat;" and he snapped his fingers in his face.

"Sit down, you rogue!" cried the old gentleman, in a sudden, harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. "Do you

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

fancy," he went on, "that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you."

"Do you mean I am a prisoner?" demanded Denis.

"I state the facts," replied the other. "I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself."

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm; but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Maletroit.

"She is in a better frame of spirit?" asked the latter.

"She is more resigned, messire," replied the priest.

"Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!" sneered the old gentleman. "A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?"

"The situation is not usual for a young damsel," said the other, "and somewhat trying to her blushes."

"She should have thought of that before she began the dance? It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our lady, she shall carry it to the end." And then addressing Denis, "Monsieur de Beaulieu," he asked, "may I present you to my niece? She has been waiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself."

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Maletroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, toward the chapel door.

R. L. STEVENSON

The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the center of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon his mind; it could not—it should not—be as he feared.

"Blanche," said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, "I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece."

The girl rose to her feet and turned toward the new comers. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu's feet—feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accoutrement even while traveling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer's countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

"That is not the man!" she cried. "My uncle, that is not the man!"

The Sire de Maletroit chirped agreeably. "Of course not," he said, "I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name."

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

"Indeed," she cried, "indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—I have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir," she said, turning to Denis, "if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour?"

"To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure," answered the young man. "This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"I am distressed to hear it," he said. "But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves," he added with a grimace, "that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony." And he turned toward the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. "My uncle, you cannot be in earnest," she said. "I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonor your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible," she added, faltering—"is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this"—and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—"that you still think this to be the man?"

"Frankly," said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, "I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Maletroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonor my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than threescore years, you forfeited, not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without

R. L. STEVENSON

delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Maletroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetizing."

And with that he went out, with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

"And what, sir," she demanded, "may be the meaning of all this?"

"God knows," returned Denis gloomily. "I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand."

"And pray how came you here?" she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. "For the rest," he added, "perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it."

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish luster. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

"Alas, how my head aches!" she said wearily—"to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Maletroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that any one should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me." She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. "My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd," she said at last. "He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass, he took my hand in his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he had finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such a shameful punishment as this! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I have told you all; and I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me."

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

"Madam," he said, "you have honored me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honor. Is Messire de Maletroit at hand?"

"I believe he is writing in the *salle* without," she answered.

"May I lead you thither, madam?" asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefast condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honor.

The Sire de Maletroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

"Sir," said Denis, with the grandest possible air, "I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered

R. L. STEVENSON

to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honor, messire, of refusing."

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

"I am afraid," he said, "Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have to offer you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window." And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. "You observe," he went on, "there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and, reeved through that, a very efficacious rope. Now, mark my words: if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Maletroit with impunity—not if she had been as common as the Pairs road—not if she were so hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you nor my own private feelings, move me at all in this matter. The honor of my house has been compromised; I believe you to be the guilty person; at least you are now in the secret; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head! It will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows; but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonor, I shall at least stop the scandal."

There was a pause.

"I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen," said Denis. "You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction."

The Sire de Maletroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

"When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honor you, Monsieur de Beaulieu," said Sire Alain; "but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the *salle* for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!" he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. "If your mind revolts against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has still something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?"

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: "If you will give me your word of honor, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with *mademoiselle*."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

"I give you my word of honor," he said.

Messire de Maletroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through

R. L. STEVENSON

the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced toward Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried, "you shall marry me after all."

"You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling toward me, you forget what you perhaps owe to others." He had the decency to keep his eyes upon the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat, playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so baldly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows, that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Maletroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

Often and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, so plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockcrow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you?" she said, looking up.

"Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said anything to wound you, believe me, it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look.

"I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I want to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterward," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another; make my last moments go pleasantly; and you will do me the chief service possible."

R. L. STEVENSON

"You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness "very gallant and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu," she broke forth—"ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?" And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

"Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, "reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

"I am very selfish," answered Blanche. "I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieus. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

"My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapor that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of window as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that any one of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the judgment day. I have

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none."

"Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu!" she exclaimed, "you forget Blanche de Maletroit."

"You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth."

"It is not that," she answered. "You mistake me if you think I am so easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognize in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land."

"And yet here I die in a mousetrap—with no more noise about it than my own squeaking," answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes and with a smile she spoke again.

"I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Any one who gives his life for another will be met in paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For . . . Pray, do you think me beautiful?" she asked, with a deep flush.

"Indeed, madam, I do," he said.

"I am glad of that," she answered heartily. "Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly."

"You are very good," he said; "but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied, holding down her head. "Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you

R. L. STEVENSON

with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now," she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, "although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments toward me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own: and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom."

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

"It is a small love," he said, "that shies at a little pride."

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

"Come hither to the window," he said with a sigh. "Here is the dawn."

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colorless and clean; and the valley underneath was flooded with a gray reflection. A few thin vapors clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangor in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the treetops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun. Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

"Has the day begun already?" she said; and then, illogically enough: "the night has been so long! Alas! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns?"

"What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his.

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

She was silent.

"Blanche," he said, with a swift uncertain passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world; and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house; and a clatter of armor in the corridor showed that the retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard?" she whispered, leaning toward him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Maletroit wished his new nephew a good-morning.

**THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE
GRANGE**

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

I AM sure that Nature never intended me to be a self-made man. There are times when I can hardly bring myself to realize that twenty years of my life were spent behind the counter of a grocer's shop in the East End of London, and that it was through such an avenue that I reached a wealthy independence and the possession of Goresthorpe Grange. My habits are conservative, and my tastes refined and aristocratic. I have a soul which spurns the vulgar herd. Our family, the D'Odds, date back to a prehistoric era, as is to be inferred from the fact that their advent into British history is not commented on by any trustworthy historian. Some instinct tells me that the blood of a Crusader runs in my veins. Even now, after the lapse of so many years, such exclamations as "By'r Lady!"—rise naturally to my lips, and I feel that, should circumstances require it, I am capable of rising in my stirrups and dealing an infidel a blow—say with a mace—which would considerably astonish him.

Goresthorpe Grange is a feudal mansion—or so it was termed in the advertisement which originally brought it under my notice. Its right to this adjective had a most remarkable effect upon its price, and the advantages gained may possibly be more sentimental than real. Still, it is soothing to me to know that I have slits in my staircase through which I can discharge arrows; and there is a sense of power in the fact of possessing a complicated apparatus by means of which I am enabled to pour molten lead upon the head of the casual visitor. These things chime in with my peculiar humor, and I do not grudge to pay for them. I am proud of my battlements and of the circular, uncovered sewer which girds me round. I am proud of my portcullis and donjon and keep. There is but one thing wanting to

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

round off the mediævalism of my abode, and to render it symmetrically and completely antique. Goresthorpe Grange is not provided with a ghost.

Any man with old-fashioned tastes and ideas as to how such establishments should be conducted would have been disappointed at the omission. In my case it was particularly unfortunate. From my childhood I had been an earnest student of the supernatural, and a firm believer in it. I have reveled in ghostly literature until there is hardly a tale bearing upon the subject which I have not perused. I learned the German language for the sole purpose of mastering a book upon demonology. When an infant I have secreted myself in dark rooms in the hope of seeing some of those bogies with which my nurse used to threaten me; and the same feeling is as strong in me now as then. It was a proud moment when I felt that a ghost was one of the luxuries which my money might command.

It is true that there was no mention of an apparition in the advertisement. On reviewing the mildewed walls, however, and the shadowy corridors, I had taken it for granted that there was such a thing on the premises. As the presence of a kennel presupposes that of a dog, so I imagined that it was impossible that such desirable quarters should be untenanted by one or more restless shades. Good heavens, what can the noble family from whom I purchased it have been doing these hundreds of years! Was there no member of it spirited enough to make away with his sweetheart, or take some other steps calculated to establish a hereditary spectre? Even now I can hardly write with patience upon the subject.

For a long time I hoped against hope. Never did rat squeak behind the wainscot, or rain drip upon the attic floor, without a wild thrill shooting through me as I thought that at last I had come upon traces of some unquiet soul. I felt no touch of fear upon these occasions. If it occurred in the night-time, I would send Mrs. D'Odd—who is a strong-minded woman—to investigate the matter while I covered up my head with the bedclothes and indulged in an ecstasy of expectation. Alas, the result was always the same! The suspicious sound would be traced to some cause so absurdly

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

natural and commonplace that the most fervid imagination could not clothe it with any of the glamour of romance.

I might have reconciled myself to this state of things had it not been for Jorrocks, of Havistock Farm. Jorrocks is a coarse, burly, matter-of-fact fellow whom I only happen to know through the accidental circumstance of his fields adjoining my demesne. Yet this man, though utterly devoid of all appreciation of archæological unities, is in possession of a well-authenticated and undeniable spectre. Its existence only dates back, I believe, to the reign of the Second George, when a young lady cut her throat upon hearing of the death of her lover at the battle of Dettingen. Still, even that gives the house an air of respectability, especially when coupled with blood-stains upon the floor. Jorrocks is densely unconscious of his good fortune; and his language, when he reverts to the apparition, is painful to listen to. He little dreams how I covet every one of those moans and nocturnal wails which he describes with unnecessary oburgation. Things are indeed coming to a pretty pass when democratic spectres are allowed to desert the landed proprietors and annul every social distinction by taking refuge in the houses of the great unrecognized.

I have a large amount of perseverance. Nothing else could have raised me into my rightful sphere, considering the uncongenial atmosphere in which I spent the earlier part of my life. I felt now that a ghost must be secured, but how to set about securing one was more than either Mrs. D'Odd or myself was able to determine. My reading taught me that such phenomena are usually the outcome of crime. What crime was to be done, then, and who was to do it? A wild idea entered my mind that Watkins, the house-steward, might be prevailed upon—for a consideration—to immolate himself or some one else in the interests of the establishment. I put the matter to him in a half-jesting manner; but it did not seem to strike him in a favorable light. The other servants sympathized with him in his opinion—at least, I can not account in any other way for their having left the house in a body the same afternoon.

"My dear," Mrs. D'Odd remarked to me one day after dinner, as I sat moodily sipping a cup of sack—I love the

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

good old names—"my dear, that odious ghost of Jorrocks' has been gibbering again."

"Let it gibber!" I answered, recklessly.

Mrs. D'Odd struck a few chords on her virginal and looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"I tell you what it is, Argentine," she said at last, using the pet name which we usually substitute for Silas, "we must have a ghost sent down from London."

"How can you be so idiotic, Matilda," I remarked, severely. "Who could get us such a thing?"

"My cousin, Jack Brocket, could," she answered, confidently.

Now, this cousin of Matilda's was rather a sore subject between us. He was a rakish, clever young fellow, who had tried his hand at many things, but wanted perseverance to succeed at any. He was, at that time, in chambers in London, professing to be a general agent, and really living, to a great extent, upon his wits. Matilda managed so that most of our business should pass through his hands, which certainly saved me a great deal of trouble; but I found that Jack's commission was generally considerably larger than all the other items of the bill put together. It was this fact which made me feel inclined to rebel against any further negotiations with the young gentleman.

"Oh, yes, he could," insisted Mrs. D., seeing the look of disapprobation upon my face. "You remember how well he managed that business about the crest?"

"It was only a resuscitation of the old family coat of arms, my dear," I protested.

Matilda smiled in an irritating manner.

"There was a resuscitation of the family portraits, too, dear," she remarked. "You must allow that Jack selected them very judiciously."

I thought of the long line of faces which adorned the walls of my banqueting-hall, from the burly Norman robber, through every gradation of casque, plume, and ruff, to the sombre Chesterfieldian individual who appears to have staggered against a pillar in his agony at the return of a maiden MS. which he grips convulsively in his right hand. I was fain to confess that in that instance he had done his work

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

well, and that it was only fair to give him an order—with the usual commission—for a family spectre, should such a thing be attainable.

It is one of my maxims to act promptly when once my mind is made up. Noon of the next day found me ascending the spiral stone staircase which leads to Mr. Brocket's chambers, and admiring the succession of arrows and fingers upon the whitewashed wall, all indicating the direction of that gentleman's sanctum. As it happened, artificial aids of the sort were unnecessary, as an animated flap-dance overhead could proceed from no other quarter, though it was replaced by a deathly silence as I groped my way up the stair. The door was opened by a youth evidently astounded at the appearance of a client, and I was ushered into the presence of my young friend, who was writing furiously in a large ledger—upside down, as I afterward discovered.

After the first greetings, I plunged into business at once. "Look here, Jack," I said, "I want you to get me a spirit, if you can."

"Spirits you mean!" shouted my wife's cousin, plunging his hand into the waste-paper basket and producing a bottle with the celerity of a conjuring trick. "Let's have a drink!"

I held up my hand as a mute appeal against such a proceeding so early in the day; but on lowering it again I found that I almost involuntarily closed my fingers round the tumbler which my adviser had pressed upon me. I drank the contents hastily off, lest any one should come in upon us and set me down as a toper. After all, there was something very amusing about the young fellow's eccentricities.

"Not spirits," I explained, smilingly; "an apparition—a ghost. If such a thing is to be had, I should be very willing to negotiate."

A ghost for Goresthorpe Grange?" inquired Mr. Brocket with as much coolness as if I had asked for a drawing-room suite.

"Quite so," I answered.

"Easiest thing in the world," said my companion, filling up my glass again in spite of my remonstrance. "Let us see!" Here he took down a large red note-book, with all the

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

letters of the alphabet in a fringe down the edge. "A ghost you said, didn't you. That's G. G—gems—gimlets—gaspipes—gauntlets—guns—galleys. Ah, here we are! Ghosts. Volume nine, section six, page forty-one. Excuse me!" And Jack ran up a ladder and began rummaging among a pile of ledgers on a high shelf. I felt half inclined to empty my glass into the spittoon when his back was turned; but on second thoughts I disposed of it in a legitimate way.

"Here it is!" cried my London agent, jumping off the ladder with a crash, and depositing an enormous volume of manuscript upon the table. "I have all these things tabulated, so that I may lay my hands upon them in a moment. It's all right—it's quite weak" (here he filled our glasses again). "What were we looking up, again?"

"Ghosts," I suggested.

"Of course; page 41. Here we are. 'J. H. Fowler & Son, Dunkel Street, suppliers of mediums to the nobility and gentry; charms sold—love-philters—mummies—horoscopes cast.' Nothing in your line there, I suppose?"

I shook my head despondingly.

"Frederick Tabb," continued my wife's cousin, "sole channel of communication between the living and the dead. Proprietor of the spirits of Byron, Kirke White, Grimaldi, Tom Cribb, and Inigo Jones. That's about the figure!"

"Nothing romantic enough there," I objected. "Good heavens! Fancy a ghost with a black eye and a handkerchief tied round its waist, or turning somersaults, and saying, 'How are you to-morrow?'" The very idea made me so warm that I emptied my glass and filled it again.

"Here is another," said my companion, "'Christopher McCarthy; bi-weekly séances—attended by all the eminent spirits of ancient and modern times. Nativities—charms—abracadabras, messages from the dead.' He might be able to help us. However, I shall have a hunt round myself to-morrow, and see some of these fellows. I know their haunts, and it's odd if I can't pick up something cheap. So there's an end of business," he concluded, hurling the ledger into the corner; "and now we'll have something to drink."

We had several things to drink—so many that my in-

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

ventive faculties were dulled next morning, and I had some little difficulty in explaining to Mrs. D'Odd why it was that I hung my boots and spectacles upon a peg along with my other garments before retiring to rest. The new hopes excited by the confident manner in which my agent had undertaken the commission caused me to rise superior to alcoholic reaction, and I paced about the rambling corridors and old-fashioned rooms picturing to myself the appearance of my expected acquisition, and deciding what part of the building would harmonize best with its presence. After much consideration, I pitched upon the banquetting-hall as being, on the whole, most suitable for its reception. It was a long low room, hung round with valuable tapestry and interesting relics of the old family to whom it had belonged. Coats of mail and implements of war glimmered fitfully as the light of the fire played over them, and the wind crept under the door, moving the hangings to and fro with a ghastly rustling. At one end there was the raised dais, on which in ancient times the host and his guests used to spread their table, while a descent of a couple of steps led to the lower part of the hall, where the vassals and retainers held wassail. The floor was uncovered by any sort of carpet, but a layer of rushes had been scattered over it by my direction. In the whole room there was nothing to remind one of the nineteenth century; except, indeed, my own solid silver plate, stamped with the resuscitated family arms, which was laid out upon an oak table in the centre. This, I determined, should be the haunted room, supposing my wife's cousin to succeed in his negotiation with the spirit-mongers. There was nothing for it now but to wait patiently until I heard some news of the result of his inquiries.

A letter came in the course of a few days, which, if it was short, was at least encouraging. It was scribbled in pencil on the back of a play-bill, and sealed apparently with a tobacco-stopper. "Am on the track," it said. "Nothing of the sort to be had from any professional spiritualist, but picked up a fellow in a pub yesterday who says he can manage it for you. Will send him down unless you wire to the contrary. Abrahams is his name, and he has done one

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

or two of these jobs before." The letter wound up with some incoherent allusions to a check, and was signed by my affectionate cousin, John Brocket.

I need hardly say that I did not wire, but awaited the arrival of Mr. Abrahams with all impatience. In spite of my belief in the supernatural, I could scarcely credit the fact that any mortal could have such a command over the spirit-world as to deal in them and barter them against mere earthly gold. Still, I had Jack's word for it that such a trade existed; and here was a gentleman with a Judaical name ready to demonstrate it by proof positive. How vulgar and commonplace Jorrock's eighteenth-century ghost would appear should I succeed in securing a real mediæval apparition! I almost thought that one had been sent down in advance, for, as I walked round the moat that night before retiring to rest, I came upon a dark figure engaged in surveying the machinery of my portcullis and drawbridge. His start of surprise, however, and the manner in which he hurried off into the darkness, speedily convinced me of his earthly origin, and I put him down as some admirer of one of my female retainers mourning over the muddy Hellespont which divided him from his love. Whoever he may have been, he disappeared and did not return, though I loitered about for some time in the hope of catching a glimpse of him and exercising my feudal rights upon his person.

Jack Brocket was as good as his word. The shades of another evening were beginning to darken round Gores-thorpe Grange, when a peal at the outer bell, and the sound of a fly pulling up, announced the arrival of Mr. Abrahams. I hurried down to meet him, half expecting to see a choice assortment of ghosts crowding in at his rear. Instead, however, of being the sallow-faced, melancholy-eyed man that I had pictured to myself, the ghost-dealer was a sturdy little podgy fellow, with a pair of wonderfully keen, sparkling eyes and a mouth which was constantly stretched in a good-humored, if somewhat artificial, grin. His sole stock-in-trade seemed to consist of a small leather bag jealously locked and strapped, which emitted a metallic clink upon being placed on the stone flags of the hall.

"And 'ow are you, sir?" he asked, wringing my hand with

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

the utmost effusion. "And the missis, 'ow is she? And all the others—'ow's all their 'ealth?"

I intimated that we were all as well as could reasonably be expected; but Mr. Abrahams happened to catch a glimpse of Mrs. D'Odd in the distance, and at once plunged at her with another string of inquiries as to her health, delivered so volubly and with such an intense earnestness that I half expected to see him terminate his cross-examination by feeling her pulse and demanding a sight of her tongue. All this time his little eyes rolled round and round, shifting perpetually from the floor to the ceiling, and from the ceiling to the walls, taking in apparently every article of furniture in a single comprehensive glance.

Having satisfied himself that neither of us was in a pathological condition, Mr. Abrahams suffered me to lead him upstairs, where a repast had been laid out for him to which he did ample justice. The mysterious little bag he carried along with him, and deposited it under his chair during the meal. It was not until the table had been cleared and we were left together that he broached the matter on which he had come down.

"I hunderstand," he remarked, puffing at a trichinopoly, "that you want my 'elp in fitting up this 'ere 'ouse with a happarition."

I acknowledged the correctness of his surmise, while mentally wondering at those restless eyes of his, which still danced about the room as if he were making an inventory of the contents.

"And you won't find a better man for the job, though I says it as shouldn't," continued my companion. "Wot did I say to the young gent wot spoke to me in the bar of the Lame Dog? 'Can you do it?' says he. 'Try me,' says I, me and my bag. Just try me.' I couldn't say fairer than that."

My respect for Jack Bocket's business capacities began to go up very considerably. He certainly seemed to have managed the matter wonderfully well. "You don't mean to say that you carry ghosts about in bags?" I remarked, with diffidence.

Mr. Abrahams smiled a smile of superior knowledge.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

"You wait," he said; "give me the right place and the right hour, with a little of the essence of *Lucoptolycus*"—here he produced a small bottle from his waistcoat-pocket—"and you won't find no ghost that I ain't up to. You'll see them yourself, and pick your own, and I can't say fairer than that."

As all Mr. Abrahams' protestations of fairness were accompanied by a cunning leer and a wink from one or other of his wicked little eyes, the impression of candor was somewhat weakened.

"When are you going to do it?" I asked, reverentially.

"Ten minutes to one in the morning," said Mr. Abrahams, with decision. "Some says midnight, but I says ten to one, when there ain't such a crowd, and you can pick your own ghost. And now," he continued, rising to his feet, "suppose you trot me round the premises, and let me see where you wants it; for there's some places as attracts 'em, and some as they won't hear of—not if there was no other place in the world."

Mr. Abrahams inspected our corridors and chambers with a most critical and observant eye, fingering the old tapestry with the air of a connoisseur, and remarking in an undertone that it would "match uncommon nice." It was not until he reached the banqueting-hall, however, which I had myself picked out, that his admiration reached the pitch of enthusiasm. "'Ere's the place!" he shouted, dancing, bag in hand, round the table on which my plate was lying, and looking not unlike some quaint little goblin himself "'Ere's the place; we won't get nothin' to beat this! A fine room—noble, solid, none of your electro-plate trash! That's the way as things ought to be done, sir. Plenty of room for 'em to glide here. Send up some brandy and a box of weeds; I'll sit here by the fire and do the preliminaries, which is more trouble than you think; for them ghosts carries on hawful at times, before they finds out who they've got to deal with. If you was in the room they'd tear you to pieces as like as not. You leave me alone to tackle them, and at half-past twelve come in, and I'll lay they'll be quiet enough by then."

Mr. Abrahams' request struck me as a reasonable one, so I left him with his feet upon the mantel-piece, and his

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

chair in front of the fire, fortifying himself with stimulants against his refractory visitors. From the room beneath, in which I sat with Mrs. D'Odd, I could hear that after sitting for some time he rose up, and paced about the hall with quick, impatient steps. We then heard him try the lock of the door, and afterward drag some heavy article of furniture in the direction of the window, on which, apparently, he mounted, for I heard the creaking of the rusty hinges as the diamond-paned casement folded backward, and I knew it to be situated several feet above the little man's reach. Mrs. D'Odd says that she could distinguish his voice speaking in low and rapid whispers after this, but that may have been her imagination. I confess that I began to feel more impressed than I had deemed it possible to be. There was something awesome in the thought of the solitary mortal standing by the open window and summoning in from the gloom outside the spirits of the nether world. It was with a trepidation which I could hardly disguise from Matilda that I observed that the clock was pointing to half-past twelve, and that the time had come for me to share the vigil of my visitor.

He was sitting in his old position when I entered, and there were no signs of the mysterious movements which I had overheard, though his chubby face was flushed as with recent exertion.

"Are you succeeding all right?" I asked as I came in, putting on as careless an air as possible, but glancing involuntarily round to see if we were alone.

"Only your help is needed to complete the matter," said Mr. Abrahams, in a solemn voice. "You shall sit by me and partake of the essence of *Lucoptolycus*, which removes the scales from our earthly eyes. Whatever you may chance to see, speak not and make no movement, lest you break the spell." His manner was subdued, and his usual cockney vulgarity had entirely disappeared. I took the chair which he indicated, and awaited the result.

My companion cleared the rushes from the floor in our neighborhood, and going down upon his hands and knees, described a half circle with chalk, which inclosed the fireplace and ourselves. Round the edge of this half circle he

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

drew several hieroglyphics, not unlike the signs of the zodiac. He then stood up and uttered a long invocation, delivered so rapidly that it sounded like a single gigantic word in some uncouth guttural language. Having finished this prayer, if prayer it was, he pulled out the small bottle which he had produced before, and poured a couple of teaspoonfuls of clear, transparent fluid into a vial, which he handed to me with an intimation that I should drink it.

The liquid had a faintly sweet odor, not unlike the aroma of certain sorts of apples. I hesitated a moment before applying it to my lips, but an impatient gesture from my companion overcame my scruples, and I tossed it off. The taste was not unpleasant; and, as it gave rise to no immediate effects, I leaned back in my chair and composed myself for what was to come. Mr. Abrahams seated himself beside me, and I felt that he was watching my face from time to time while repeating some more of the invocations in which he had indulged before.

A sense of delicious warmth and languor began gradually to steal over me, partly, perhaps, from the heat of the fire, and partly from some unexplained cause. An uncontrollable impulse to sleep weighed down my eyelids, while, at the same time my brain worked actively, and a hundred beautiful and pleasing ideas flitted through it. So utterly lethargic did I feel that, though I was aware that my companion put his hand over the region of my heart, as if to feel how it was beating, I did not attempt to prevent him, nor did I even ask him for the reason of his action. Everything in the room appeared to be reeling slowly round in a drowsy dance, of which I was the centre. The great elk's head at the far end wagged solemnly backward and forward, while the massive salvers on the tables performed cotillions with the claret cooler and the epergne. My head fell upon my breast from sheer heaviness, and I should have become unconscious had I not been recalled to myself by the opening of the door at the other end of the hall.

This door led on to the raised dais, which, as I have mentioned, the heads of the house used to reserve for their own use. As it swung slowly back upon its hinges, I sat up in my chair, clutching at the arms, and staring with a

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

horrified glare at the dark passage outside. Something was coming down it—something unformed and intangible, but still a something. Dim and shadowy, I saw it flit across the threshold, while a blast of ice-cold air swept down the room, which seemed to blow through me, chilling my very heart. I was aware of the mysterious presence, and then I heard it speak in a voice like the sighing of an east wind among pine-trees on the banks of a desolate sea.

It said: "I am the invisible nonentity. I have affinities and am subtle. I am electric, magnetic, and spiritualistic. I am the great ethereal sighheaver. I kill dogs. Mortal, wilt thou choose me?"

I was about to speak, but the words seemed to be choked in my throat; and before I could get them out, the shadow flitted across the hall and vanished in the darkness at the other side, while a long-drawn melancholy sigh quivered through the apartment.

I turned my eyes toward the door once more, and beheld, to my astonishment, a very small old woman, who hobbled along the corridor and into the hall. She passed backward and forward several times, and then, crouching down at the very edge of the circle upon the floor, she disclosed a face, the horrible malignity of which shall never be banished from my recollection. Every foul passion appeared to have left its mark upon that hideous countenance. "Ha! ha!" she screamed, holding out her wizened hands like the talons of an unclean bird. "You see what I am. I am the fiendish old woman. I wear snuff-colored silks. My curse descends on people. Sir Walter was partial to me. Shall I be thine, mortal?"

I endeavored to shake my head in horror; on which she aimed a blow at me with her crutch, and vanished with an eldritch scream.

By this time my eyes turned naturally toward the open door, and I was hardly surprised to see a man walk in, of tall and noble stature. His face was deathly pale, but was surmounted by a fringe of dark hair which fell in ringlets down his back. A short pointed beard covered his chin.

He was dressed in loose-fitting clothes, made apparently of yellow satin, and a large white ruff surrounded his neck.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

He paced across the room with slow and majestic strides. Then turning, he addressed me in a sweet, exquisitely modulated voice.

"I am the cavalier," he remarked. "I pierce and am pierced. Here is my rapier. I clink steel. This is a blood-stain over my heart. I can emit hollow groans. I am patronized by many old conservative families. I am the original manor-house apparition. I work alone, or in company with shrieking damsels."

He bent his head courteously, as though awaiting my reply, but the same choking sensation prevented me from speaking; and, with a deep bow, he disappeared.

He had hardly gone before a feeling of intense horror stole over me, and I was aware of the presence of a ghastly creature in the room, of dim outlines and uncertain proportions. One moment it seemed to pervade the entire apartment, while at another it would become invisible, but always leaving behind it a distinct consciousness of its presence. Its voice, when it spoke, was quavering and gusty. It said, "I am the leaver of footsteps and the spiller of gouts of blood. I tramp upon corridors. Charles Dickens has alluded to me. I make strange and disagreeable noises. I snatch letters and place invisible hands on people's wrists. I am cheerful. I burst into peals of hideous laughter. Shall I do one now?" I raised my hand in a deprecating way, but too late to prevent one discordant outbreak which echoed through the room. Before I could lower it the apparition was gone.

I turned my head toward the door in time to see a man come hastily and stealthily into the chamber. He was a sunburned, powerfully built fellow, with ear-rings in his ears and a Barcelona handkerchief tied loosely round his neck. His head was bent upon his chest, and his whole aspect was that of one afflicted by intolerable remorse. He paced rapidly backward and forward like a caged tiger, and I observed that a drawn knife glittered in one of his hands, while he grasped what appeared to be a piece of parchment in the other. His voice, when he spoke, was deep and sonorous. He said, "I am a murderer. I am a ruffian. I crouch when I walk. I step noiselessly. I know something

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

of the Spanish Main. I can do the lost treasure business. I have charts. Am able-bodied and a good walker. Capable of haunting a large park." He looked toward me beseechingly, but before I could make a sign I was paralyzed by the horrible sight which appeared at the door.

It was a very tall man, if, indeed, it might be called a man, for the gaunt bones were protruding through the corroding flesh, and the features were of a leaden hue. A winding-sheet was wrapped round the figure, and formed a hood over the head, from under the shadow of which two fiendish eyes, deepset in their grisly sockets, blazed and sparkled like red-hot coals. The lower jaw had fallen upon the breast, disclosing a withered, shriveled tongue and two lines of black and jagged fangs. I shuddered and drew back as this fearful apparition advanced to the edge of the circle.

"I am the American blood-curdler," it said, in a voice which seemed to come in a hollow murmur from the earth beneath it. "None other is genuine. I am the embodiment of Edgar Allan Poe. I am circumstantial and horrible. I am a low-caste, spirit-subduing spectre. Observe my blood and my bones. I am grisly and nauseous. No depending on artificial aid. Work with grave-clothes, a coffin-lid, and a galvanic battery. Turn hair white in a night." The creature stretched out its fleshless arms to me as if in entreaty, but I shook my head; and it vanished, leaving a low, sickening, repulsive odor behind it. I sank back in my chair, so overcome by terror and disgust that I would have very willingly resigned myself to dispensing with a ghost altogether, could I have been sure that this was the last of the hideous procession.

A faint sound of trailing garments warned me that it was not so. I looked up, and beheld a white figure emerging from the corridor into the light. As it stepped across the threshold I saw that it was that of a young and beautiful woman dressed in the fashion of a bygone day. Her hands were clasped in front of her, and her pale, proud face bore traces of passion and of suffering. She crossed the hall with a gentle sound, like the rustling of autumn leaves, and then, turning her lovely and unutterably sad eyes upon me, she said:

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

"I am the plaintive and sentimental, the beautiful and ill-used. I have been forsaken and betrayed. I shriek in the night-time and glide down passages. My antecedents are highly respectable and generally aristocratic. My tastes are æsthetic. Old oak furniture like this would do, with a few more coats of mail and plenty of tapestry. Will you not take me?"

Her voice died away in a beautiful cadence as she concluded, and she held out her hands as in supplication. I am always sensitive to female influences. Besides, what would Jorrocks' ghost be to this? Could anything be in better taste? Would I not be exposing myself to the chance of injuring my nervous system by interviews with such creatures as my last visitor, unless I decided at once? She gave me a seraphic smile, as if she knew what was passing in my mind. That smile settled the matter. "She will do!" I cried; "I choose this one;" and as, in my enthusiasm, I took a step toward her, I passed over the magic circle which had girdled me round.

"Argentine, we have been robbed!"

I had an indistinct consciousness of these words being spoken, or rather screamed, in my ear a great number of times without my being able to grasp their meaning. A violent throbbing in my head seemed to adapt itself to their rhythm, and I closed my eyes to the lullaby of "Robbed! robbed! robbed!" A vigorous shake caused me to open them again, however, and the sight of Mrs. D'Odd, in the scantiest of costumes and most furious of tempers, was sufficiently impressive to recall all my scattered thoughts and make me realize that I was lying on my back on the floor, with my head among the ashes which had fallen from last night's fire, and a small glass vial in my hand.

I staggered to my feet, but felt so weak and giddy that I was compelled to fall back into a chair. As my brain became clearer, stimulated by the exclamations of Matilda, I began gradually to recollect the events of the night. There was the door through which my supernatural visitors had filed. There was the circle of chalk, with the hieroglyphics round the edge. There was the cigar-box and brandy-bottle which had been honored by the attentions of Mr. Abrahams.

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

But the seer himself—where was he? and what was this open window, with a rope running out of it? And where, oh, where, was the pride of Goresthorpe Grange, the glorious plate which was to have been the delectation of generations of D'Odds? And why was Mrs. D. standing in the gray light of dawn, wringing her hands and repeating her monotonous refrain? It was only very gradually that my misty brain took these things in, and grasped the connection between them.

Reader, I have never seen Mr. Abrahams since; I have never seen the plate stamped with the resuscitated family crest; hardest of all, I have never caught a glimpse of the melancholy spectre with the trailing garments, nor do I expect that I ever shall. In fact, my night's experiences have cured me of my mania for the supernatural, and quite reconciled me to inhabiting the humdrum, nineteenth-century edifice on the outskirts of London which Mrs. D. has long had in her mind's eye.

As to the explanation of all that occurred—that is a matter which is open to several surmises. That Mr. Abrahams, the ghost-hunter, was identical with Jemmy Wilson, alias the Nottingham Crackster, is considered more than probable at Scotland Yard, and certainly the description of that remarkable burglar tallied very well with the appearance of my visitor. The small bag which I have described was picked up in a neighboring field next day, and found to contain a choice assortment of jimmies and centre-bits. Footmarks, deeply imprinted in the mud on either side of the moat, showed that an accomplice from below had received the sack of precious metals which had been let down through the open window. No doubt the pair of scoundrels, while looking round for a job, had overheard Jack Brocket's indiscreet inquiries, and had promptly availed themselves of the tempting opening.

And now as to my less substantial visitors, and the curious, grotesque vision which I had enjoyed—am I to lay it down to any real power over occult matters possessed by my Nottingham friend? For a long time I was doubtful upon the point, and eventually endeavored to solve it by consulting a well-known analyst and medical man, sending

THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE

him the few drops of the so-called essence of *Lucoptolycus* which remained in my vial. I append the letter which I received from him, only too happy to have the opportunity of winding up my little narrative by the weighty words of a man of learning:

"Arundel Street.

"Dear Sir—Your very singular case has interested me extremely. The bottle which you sent contained a strong solution of chloral, and the quantity which you describe yourself as having swallowed must have amounted to at least eighty grains of the pure hydrate. This would, of course, have reduced you to a partial state of insensibility, gradually going on to complete coma. In this semi-unconscious state of chloralism it is not unusual for circumstantial and bizarre visions to present themselves—more especially to individuals unaccustomed to the use of the drug. You tell me in your note that your mind was saturated with ghostly literature, and that you had long taken a morbid interest in classifying and recalling the various forms in which apparitions have been said to appear. You must also remember that you were expecting to see something of that very nature, and that your nervous system was worked up to an unnatural state of tension.

"Under the circumstances, I think that, far from the sequel being an astonishing one, it would have been very surprising indeed to any one versed in narcotics had you not experienced some such effects. I remain, dear sir, sincerely yours,

"T. E. Stube, M. D.

"Argentine D'Odd, Esq.,
"The Elms, Brixton."

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

BY W. W. JACOBS

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

By W. W. JACOBS

GES, I've sailed under some 'cute skippers in my time," said the night-watchman; "them that go down in big ships see the wonders o' the deep, you know," he added with a sudden chuckle, "but the one I'm going to tell you about ought never to have been trusted out without 'is ma. A good many o' my skippers had fads, but this one was the worst I ever sailed under.

"It's some few years ago now; I'd shipped on his bark, the John Elliott, as slow-going an old tub as ever I was aboard of, when I wasn't in quite a fit an' proper state to know what I was doing, an' I hadn't been in her two days afore I found out his 'obby through overhearing a few remarks made by the second mate, who came up from dinner in a hurry to make 'em. 'I don't mind saws an' knives hung round the cabin,' he ses to the fust mate, 'but when a chap has a 'uman 'and alongside 'is plate, studying it while folks is at their food, it's more than a Christian man can stand.'

"'That's nothing,' ses the fust mate, who had sailed with the bark afore. 'He's half crazy on doctoring. We nearly had a mutiny aboard once owing to his wanting to hold a post mortem on a man what fell from the mast-head. Wanted to see what the poor feller died of.'

"'I call it unwholesome,' ses the second mate very savage. 'He offered me a pill at breakfast the size of a small marble; quite put me off my feed, it did.'

"Of course, the skipper's fad soon got known for'ard. But I didn't think much about it, till one day I seed old Dan'l Dennis sitting on a locker reading. Every now and then he'd shut the book, an' look up, closing 'is eyes, an' moving his lips like a hen drinking, an' then look down at the book again.

From "Many Cargoes." Copyright 1903 by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

W. W. JACOBS

"'Why, Dan,' I ses, 'what's up? you ain't larning lessons at your time o' life?'"

"'Yes, I am,' ses Dan very soft. 'You might hear me say it, it's this one about heart disease.'"

"He hands over the book, which was stuck full o' all kinds o' diseases, and winks at me 'ard."

"'Picked it up on a book-stall,' he ses; then he shut 'is eyes an' said his piece wonderful. It made me quite queer to listen to 'im. 'That's how I feel,' ses he, when he'd finished. 'Just strength enough to get to bed. Lend a hand, Bill, an' go an' fetch the doctor.'"

"Then I see his little game, but I wasn't going to run any risks, so I just mentioned, permiscous like, to the cook as old Dan seemed rather queer, an' went back an' tried to borrow the book, being always fond of reading. Old Dan pretended he was too ill to hear what I was saying, an' afore I could take it away from him, the skipper comes hurrying down with a bag in his 'and."

"'What's the matter, my man?' ses he, 'what's the matter?'"

"'I'm all right, sir,' ses old Dan, 'cept that I've been swoonding away a little.'"

"'Tell me exactly how you feel,' ses the skipper, feeling his pulse."

"Then old Dan said his piece over to him, an' the skipper shook his head an' looked very solemn."

"'How long have you been like this?' he ses."

"'Four or five years, sir,' ses Dan. 'It ain't nothing serious, sir, is it?'"

"'You lie quite still,' ses the skipper, putting a little trumpet thing to his chest an' then listening. 'Um! there's serious mischief here, I'm afraid; the prognotice is very bad.'"

"'Prog what, sir?' ses Dan, staring."

"'Prognotice,' ses the skipper, at least I think that's the word he said. 'You keep perfectly still, an' I'll go an' mix you up a draft, and tell the cook to get some strong beef-tea on.'"

"Well, the skipper 'ad no sooner gone, than Cornish Harry, a great big lumbering chap o' six feet two, goes up to old Dan, an' he ses, 'Gimme that book.'"

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

"'Go away,' says Dan, 'don't come worrying 'ere; you 'eard the skipper say how bad my prognosice was.'

"'You lend me the book,' ses Harry, ketching hold of him, 'or else I'll bang you first, and split to the skipper arterward. I believe I'm a bit consumptive. Anyway, I'm going to sec.'

"He dragged the book away from the old man, and began to study. There was so many complaints in it he was almost tempted to have something else instead of consumption, but he decided on that at last, an' he got a cough what worried the foc'sle all night long, an' the next day, when the skipper came down to see Dan, he could 'ardly 'ear hisself speak.

"'That's a nasty cough you've got, my man,' ses he, looking at Harry.

"'Oh, it's nothing, sir,' ses Harry, careless like. 'I've 'ad it for months now off and on. I think it's perspiring so of a night does it.'

"'What?' ses the skipper. 'Do you perspire of a night?'

"'Dreadful,' ses Harry. 'You could wring the clo'es out. I s'pose it's healthy for me, ain't it, sir?'

"'Undo your shirt,' ses the skipper, going over to him, an' sticking the trumpet agin him. 'Now take a deep breath. Don't cough.'

"'I can't help it, sir,' ses Harry, 'it will come. Seems to tear me to pieces.'

"'You get to bed at once,' says the skipper, taking away the trumpet, an' shaking his 'ed. 'It's a fortunate thing for you, my lad, you're in skilled hands. With care, I believe I can pull you round. How does that medicine suit you, Dan?'

"'Beautiful, sir' says Dan. 'It's wonderful soothing. I slep' like a new-born babe arter it.'

"'I'll send you to get some more,' ses the skipper. 'You're not to get up, mind, either of you.'

"'All right, sir,' ses the two in very faint voices, an' the skipper went away arter telling us to be careful not to make a noise.

"We all thought it a fine joke at first, but the airs them two chaps give themselves was something sicker'ing. Bein' in bed all day, they was naturally wakeful of a night, and they used to call across the foc'sle inquiring arter each

W. W. JACOBS

other's healths, an' waking us other chaps up. An' they 'ud swop beef-tea an' jellies with each other, an' Dan 'ud try an' coax a little port wine out o' Harry, which he 'ad to make blood with, but Harry 'ud say he hadn't made enough that day, an' he'd drink to the better health of old Dan's prog-notice, an' smack his lips until it drove us a'most crazy to 'ear him.

"After these chaps had been ill two days, the other fellers began to put their heads together, being maddened by the smell o' beef-tea an' the like, an' said they was going to be ill too, and both the invalids got into a fearful state of excitement.

"'You'll only spoil it for all of us,' ses Harry, 'and you don't know what to have without the book.'

"'It's all very well doing your work as well as our own,' ses one of the men. 'It's our turn now. It's time you two got well.'

"'Well?' ses Harry, 'well? Why, you silly iggernerant chaps, we shan't never get well; people with our complaints never do. You ought to know that.'

"'Well, I shall split,' ses one of them.

"'You do!' ses Harry, 'you do, an' I'll put a 'ed on you that all the port wine and jellies in the world wouldn't cure. 'Sides, don't you think the skipper knows what's the matter with us?'

"'Afore the other chaps could reply, the skipper hisself comes down, accompanied by the fust mate, with a look on his face which made Harry give the deepest and hollowest cough he'd ever done.

"'What they reely want,' ses the skipper, turning to the mate, 'is keerful nussing.'

"'I wish you'd let me nuss 'em,' ses the fust mate, 'only ten minutes—I'd put 'em both on their legs, an' running for their lives into the bargain, in ten minutes.'

"'Hold your tongue, sir,' ses the skipper; 'what you say is unfeeling, besides being an insult to me. Do you think I studied medicine all these years without knowing when a man's ill?'

"The fust mate growled something, and went on deck, and the skipper started examining of 'em again. He said



W. W. JACOBS

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

they was wonderfully patient lying in bed so long, an' he had 'em wrapped up in bed clo'es and carried on deck, so as the pure air could have a go at 'em.

"We had to do the carrying, an' there they sat, breathing the pure air, and looking at the fust mate out of the corners of their eyes. If they wanted any thing from below, one of us had to go an' fetch it, an' by the time they was taken down to bed again, we all resolved to be took ill too.

"Only two of 'em did it though, for Harry, who was a powerful, ugly-tempered chap, swore he'd do all sorts o' dreadful things to us if we didn't keep well and hearty, an' all 'cept these two did. One of 'em, Mike Rafferty, laid up with a swelling on his ribs, which I knew myself he 'ad 'ad for fifteen years, and the other chap had paralysis. I never saw a man so reely happy as the skipper was. He was up an' down with his medicines and his instruments all day long, and used to make notes of the cases in a big pocketbook, and read 'em to the second mate at meal-times.

"The foc'sle had been turned into hospital about a week, an' I was on deck doing some odd job or the other, when the cook comes up to me pulling a face as long as a fiddle.

"'Nother invalid,' ses he; 'fust mate's gone stark, staring mad!'

"'Mad?' ses I.

"'Yes,' ses he. 'He's got a big basin in the galley, an' he's laughing like a hyener an' mixing bilge-water an' ink, an' paraffin an' butter an' soap an' all sorts o' things up together. The smell's enough to kill a man; I've had to come away.'

"Curious-like, I jest walked up to the galley an' puts my 'ed in, an' there was the mate as the cook said, smiling all over his face, and ladling some thick sticky stuff into a stone bottle.

"'How's the pore sufferers, sir?'" ses he, stepping out of the galley jest as the skipper was going by.

"'They're very bad; but I hope for the best,' ses the skipper, looking at him hard. 'I'm glad to see you're turned a bit more feeling.'

"'Yes, sir,' ses the mate. 'I didn't think so at fust, but

W. W. JACOBS

I can see now them chaps is all very ill. You'll s'cuse me saying it, but I don't quite approve of your treatment.'

"I thought the skipper would ha' bust.

"My treatment?' ses he. 'My treatment? What do you know about it?'

"You're treating 'em wrong, sir,' ses the mate. 'I have here' (patting the jar) 'a remedy which 'ud cure them all if you'd only let me try it.'

"Pooh!' ses the skipper. 'One medicine cure all diseases! The old story. What is it? Where'd you get it from?' ses he.

"I brought the ingredients aboard with me,' ses the mate. 'It's a wonderful medicine discovered by my grandmother, an' if I might only try it I'd thoroughly cure them pore chaps.'

"Rubbish!' ses the skipper.

"Very well, sir,' ses the mate, shrugging his shoulders. 'O' course, if you won't let me you won't. Still, I tell you, if you'd let me try I'd cure 'em all in two days. That's a fair challenge.'

"Well, they talked, and talked, and talked, until at last the skipper give way and went down below with the mate, and told the chaps they was to take the new medicine for two days, jest to prove the mate was wrong.

"Let pore old Dan try it first, sir,' ses Harry, starting up, an' sniffing as the mate took the cork out; 'he's been awful bad since you've been away.'

"Harry's worse than I am, sir,' ses Dan; 'it's only his kind heart that makes him say that.'

"It don't matter which is fust,' ses the mate, filling a tablespoon with it, 'there's plenty for all. Now, Harry.'

"Take it,' ses the skipper.

"Harry took it, an' the fuss he made you'd ha' thought he was swallering a football. It stuck all round his mouth, and he carried on so dredful that the other invalids was half sick afore it came to them.

"By the time the other three 'ad 'ad theirs it was as good as a pantermine, an' the mate corked the bottle up, and went an' sat down on a locker while they tried to rinse their mouths out with the luxuries which had been given 'em.

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

"'How do you feel?' ses the skipper.

"'I'm dying,' ses Dan.

"'So'm I,' ses Harry; 'I b'leeve the mate's pisoned us.'

"The skipper looks over at the mate very stern an' shakes his 'ed slowly.

"'It's all right,' ses the mate. 'It's always like that the first dozen or so doses.'

"'Dozen or so doses!' ses old Dan, in a faraway voice.

"'It has to be taken every twenty minutes,' ses the mate, pulling out his pipe and lighting it; an' the four men groaned all together.

"'I can't allow it,' ses the skipper, 'I can't allow it. Men's lives mustn't be sacrificed for an experiment.'

"'Tain't a experiment,' ses the mate very indignant, 'it's an old family medicine.'

"'Well, they shan't have any more,' ses the skipper firmly.

"'Look here,' ses the mate. 'If I kill any one o' these men, I'll give you twenty pound. Honor bright, I will.'

"'Make it twenty-five,' ses the skipper, considering.

"'Very good,' ses the mate. 'Twenty-five; I can't say no fairer than that, can I? It's about time for another dose now.'

"He gave 'em another tablespoonful all round as the skipper left, an' the chaps what wasn't invalids nearly bust with joy. He wouldn't let 'em have anything to take the taste out, 'cos he said it didn't give the medicine a chance, an' he told us other chaps to remove the temptation, an' you bet we did.

"After the fifth dose, the invalids began to get desperate, an' when they heard they'd got to be woke up every twenty minutes through the night to take the stuff, they sort o' give up. Old Dan said he felt a gentle glow stealing over him and strengthening him, and Harry said that it felt like a healing balm to his lungs. All of 'em agreed it was a wonderful sort o' medicine, an' arter the sixth dose the man with paralysis dashed up on deck, and ran up the rigging like a cat. He sat there for hours spitting, an' swore he'd brain anybody who interrupted him, an' arter a little while Mike Rafferty went up and j'ined him, an' if the fust mate's

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

ears didn't burn by reason of the things them two pore sufferers said about 'im, they ought to.

"They was all doing full work next day, an' though, o' course, the skipper saw how he'd been done, he didn't allude to it. Not in words, that is; but when a man tries to make four chaps do the work of eight, an' hits 'em when they don't, it's a easy job to see where the shoe pinches."

**THE STICKIT MINISTER
THE LAMMAS PREACHING
BY S. R. CROCKETT**

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were present at the meeting.

2. The second part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were absent from the meeting.

THE STICKIT MINISTER

By S. R. CROCKETT

THE RENUNCIATION OF ROBERT FRASER, FORMERLY STUDENT IN DIVINITY

HE crows were wheeling behind the plough in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of storm in the air—a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea-gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown by the south wind up from the Solway—a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether. Robert Fraser bent to the plough handles, and cast a keen and wary eye towards his guide posts on the ridge. His face was colourless, even when a dash of rain came swirling across from the crest of Ben Gairn, whose steep bulk heaved itself a blue haystack above the level horizon of the moorland. He was dressed like any other ploughman of the south uplands—rough homespun much the worse for wear, and leggings the colour of the red soil which he was reversing with the share of his plough. Yet there was that about Robert Fraser which marked him no common man. When he paused at the top of the ascent, and stood with his back against the horns of the plough, the countryman's legacy from Adam of the Mattock, he pushed back his weatherbeaten straw hat with a characteristic gesture, and showed a white forehead with blue veins channelling it—a damp, heavy lock of black hair clinging to it as in Severn's picture of John Keats on his deathbed. Robert Fraser saw a couple of black specks which moved smoothly and evenly along the top of the distant dyke of the highway. He stood still for a moment or two watching them. As they came nearer, they resolved themselves into a smart young man sitting in a well-equipped

S. R. CROCKETT

gig drawn by a showily-actioned horse, and driven by a man in livery. As they passed rapidly along the road the hand of the young man appeared in a careless wave of recognition over the stone dyke, and Robert Fraser lifted his slack reins in staid acknowledgment. It was more than a year since the brothers had looked each other so nearly in the eyes. They were Dr. Henry Fraser, the rising physician of Carn Edward, and his elder brother Robert, once Student of Divinity at Edinburgh College, whom three parishes knew as 'The Stickit Minister.'

When Robert Fraser stabled his horses that night and went into his supper, he was not surprised to find his friend, Saunders M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, sitting by the peat fire in the 'room.' Almost the only thing which distinguished the Stickit Minister from the other small farmers of the parish of Dullarg was the fact that he always sat in the evening by himself ben the hoose, and did not use the kitchen in common with his housekeeper and herd boy, save only at meal-times. Robert had taken to Saunders ever since—the back of his ambition broken—he had settled down to the farm, and he welcomed him with shy cordiality.

'You'll take a cup of tea, Saunders?' he asked.

'Thank ye, Robert, I wadna be waur o't,' returned his friend.

'I saw your brither the day,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, after the tea-cups had been cleared away, and the silent housekeeper had replaced the books upon the table. Saunders picked a couple of them up, and, having adjusted his glasses, he read the titles—Milton's Works, and a volume of a translation of Dörner's Person of Christ.

'I saw yer brither the day; he maun be gettin' a big practice!'

'Ay!' said Robert Fraser, very thoughtfully.

Saunders M'Quhirr glanced up quickly. It was, of course, natural that the unsuccessful elder brother should envy the prosperous younger, but he had thought that Robert Fraser was living on a different plane. It was one of the few things that the friends had never spoken of, though every one knew why Dr. Fraser did not visit his brother's little farm. 'He's gettin' in wi' the big fowk noo, an' thinks

THE STICKIT MINISTER

maybe that his brither wad do him nae credit.' That was the way the clash of the country-side explained the matter.

'I never told you how I came to leave the college, Saunders,' said the younger man, resting his brow on a hand that even the horn of the plough could not make other than diaphanous.

'No,' said Saunders quietly, with a tender gleam coming into the humorsome kindly eyes that lurked under their bushy tussocks of grey eyebrow. Saunders's humour lay near the Fountain of Tears.

'No,' continued Robert Fraser, 'I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good frien' to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like to let you see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeth from the beginning.'

'Hear till him,' said Saunders; 'man, yer hoast is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hae I no' kenned ye sins ye war the sie o' twa scrubbers?'

'I thank you, Saunders,' said Robert, 'but I am well aware that I'm to die this year. No, no, not a word. It is the Lord's will! It's mair than seven year now since I first kenned that my days were to be few. It was the year my faither died, and left Harry and me by our lane.

'He left no siller to speak of, just plenty to lay him decently in the kirkyard among his forebears. I had been a year at the Divinity Hall then, and was going up to put in my discourses for the next session. I had been troubled with my breast for some time, and so called one day at the infirmary to get a word with Sir James. He was very busy when I went in, and never noticed me till the hoast took me. Then on a sudden he looked up from his papers, came quickly over to me, put his own white handkerchief to my mouth, and quietly said, "Come into my room, laddie!" Ay, he was a good man and a faithful, Sir James, if ever there was one. He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-

S. R. CROCKETT

headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump.'

'What's that?' queried Saunders.

'A cruel ploy not worth speaking of,' continued the Stickit Minister. 'Well, I found something in my throat when I tried to thank him. But I came my ways home to the Dullarg, and night and day I considered what was to be done, with so much to do and so little time to do it. It was clear that both Harry and me could not gang through the college on the little my faither had left. So late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own "man"; then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.'

'Now all these things I did, Saunders, but there's no use telling you what they cost in the doing. They were right to do, and they were done. I do not repent any of them. I would do them all over again were they to do, but it's been bitterer than I thought.'

The Stickit Minister took his head off his hand and leaned wearily back in his chair.

'The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him in Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the "stickit minister" that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me.'

'I ken,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.

'Well,' continued Robert Fraser, lightened by Saunders's

THE STICKIT MINISTER

apparent agreement, 'the time came when he was clear from the college, and wanted a practice. He had been ill-advised that he had not got his share of the farm, and he wanted it sold to share and share alike. Now I kenned, and you ken, Saunders, that it's no' worth much in one share let alone two. So I got the place quietly bonded, and bought him old Dr. Aitkin's practice in Cairn Edward with the money.

'I have tried to do my best for the lad, for it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper. He doesna come here much,' continued Robert, 'but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!'

'That was kind of him,' said Saunders M'Quhirr.

'Ay, was it no',' said the Stickit Minister, eagerly, with a soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown, which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece.

'I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November,' said Robert. 'So I'll be obliged to flit.'

Saunders M'Quhirr started to his feet in a moment. 'Never,' he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, 'never as lang as there's a beast on Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank'—bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

'No, Saunders, no,' said the Stickit Minister, very gently; 'I thank you kindly, but I'll be flitted before that!'

THE LAMMAS PREACHING

By S. R. CROCKETT

AND I further intimate,' said the minister, 'that I will preach this evening at Cauldshaws, and my text will be from the ninth chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes and the tenth verse, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'Save us,' said Janet MacTaggart, 'he's clean forgotten "if it be the Lord's wull." Maybe he'll be for gaun whether it's His wull or no'—he's a sair masterfu' man, the minister; but he comes frae the Machars,¹ an' kens little aboot the jealous God we hae amang the hills o' Gallowa!'

The minister continued, in the same high, level tone in which he did his preaching, 'There are a number of sluggards who lay the weight of their own laziness on the Almighty, saying, "I am a worm and no man—how should I strive with my Maker?" whenever they are at strife with their own sluggishness. There will be a word for all such this evening at the farmtown of Cauldshaws, presently occupied by Gilbert M'Kissock—public worship to begin at seven o'clock.'

The congregation of Barnessock kirk tumbled amicably over its own heels with eagerness to get into the kirkyaird in order to settle the momentous question, 'Wha's back was he on the day?'

Robert Kirk, Carsethorn, had a packet of peppermint lozenges in the crown of his 'lum' hat—deponed to by Elizabeth Douglas or Barr, in Barnbogie, whose husband, Weelum Barr, put on the hat of the aforesaid Robert Kirk by mistake for his own, whereupon the peppermints fell to the floor and rolled under the pews in most unseemly fashion. Elizabeth Kirk is of opinion that this should be brought to the notice of Session, she herself always taking her peppermint while genteelly wiping her mouth with the corner of her handkerchief. Robert Kirk, on being put to the ques-

¹The Eastern Lowlands of Wigtonshire.

THE LAMMAS PREACHING

tion, admits the fact, but says that it was his wife put them there to be near her hand.

The minister, however, ready with his word, brought him to shame by saying, 'O Robert, Robert, that was just what Adam said, "The woman Thou gavest me, she gave me to eat!"' The aforesaid Robert Kirk thinks that it is meddling with the original Hebrew to apply this to peppermints, and also says that Elizabeth Kirk is an impident besom, and furthermore that, as all the country well knows—(Here the chronicler omits much matter actionable in the civil courts of the realm).

'Janet,' said the minister to his housekeeper, 'I am to preach to-night at Cauldshaws on the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'I ken,' said Janet, 'I saw it on yer desk. I pat it ablow the clock for fear the wun's o' heeven micht blaw it awa' like chaff, an' you couldna do wantin' it!'

'Janet MacTaggart,' said the minister, tartly, 'bring in the denner, and do not meddle with what does not concern you.'

Janet could not abide read sermons; her natural woman rose against them. She knew, as she had said, that God was a jealous God, and, with regard to the minister, she looked upon herself as His viceregent.

'He's young an' terrable ram-stam an' opeenionated—fu' o' buik-lear, but wi' little gracious experience. For a' that, the root o' the maitter's in 'im,' said Janet, not unhopefully.

'I'm gaun to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text's "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"' said the minister to the precentor that afternoon, on the manse doorstep.

'The Lord's no' in a' his thochts. I'll gang wi' the lad mysel',' said the precentor.

Now, Galloway is so much out of the world that the Almighty has not there lifted His hand from reward and punishment, from guiding and restraining, as He has done in big towns where everything goes by machinery. Man may say that there is no God when he only sees a handbreadth of smoky heaven between the chimney-pots; but out on the fields of oats and bear, and up on the screes of the hillsides, where the mother granite sticks her bleaching ribs

S. R. CROCKETT

through the heather, men have reached great assurance on this and other matters.

The burns were running red with the mighty July rain when Douglas Maclellan started over the meadows and moors to preach his sermon at the farmtown of Cauldshaws. He had thanked the Lord that morning in his opening prayer for 'the bounteous rain wherewith He had seen meet to refresh His weary heritage.'

His congregation silently acquiesced, 'for what,' said they, 'could a man from the Machars be expected to ken about meadow hay?'

When the minister and the precentor got to the foot of the manse loaning, they came upon the parish ne'er-do-weel, Ebie Kirgan, who kept himself in employment by constantly scratching his head, trying to think of something to do, and whose clothes were constructed on the latest sanitary principles of ventilation. The ruins of Ebie's hat were usually tipped over one eye for enlarged facilities of scratching in the rear.

'If it's yer wull, minister, I'll come to hear ye the nicht. It's drawing to mair rain, I'm thinkin'!' said the Scarecrow.

'I hope the discourse may be profitable to you, Ebenezer, for, as I intimated this morning, I am to preach from the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'Ay, minister,' said Ebie, relieving his right hand, and tipping his hat over the other eye to give his left free play. So the three struck over the fields, making for the thorn tree at the corner, where Robert Kirk's dyke dipped into the standing water of the meadow.

'Do you think ye can manage it, Maister Maclellan?' said the precentor. 'Ye're wat half-way up the leg already.'

'An' there's sax feet o' black moss water in the Laneburn as sure as I'm a leevin' sow!' added Ebie Kirgan.

'I'm to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might!"' said the minister, stubbornly glooming from under the caves of his eyebrows as the swarthy men from the Machars are wont to do. His companions said no more. They came to Camelon Lane, where usually Robert Kirk had a leaping pole

S. R. CROCKETT

on either bank to assist the traveller across, but both poles had gone down the water in the morning to look for Robert's meadow hay.

'Tak' care, Maister Maclellan, ye'll be in deep water afore ye ken. O man, ye had far better turn!'

The precentor stood up to his knees in water on what had once been the bank, and wrung his hands. But the minister pushed steadily ahead into the turbid and sluggish water.

'I canna come, oh, I canna come, for I'm a man that has a family.'

'It's no' your work; stay where ye are,' cried the minister, without looking over his shoulder; 'but as for me, I'm intimated to preach this night at Cauldshaws, and my text——'

Here he stepped into a deep hole, and his text was suddenly shut within him by the gurgle of moss water in his throat. His arms rose above the surface like the black spars of a windmill. But Ebie Kirgan sculled himself swiftly out, swimming with his shoeless feet, and pushed the minister before him to the further bank—the water gushing out of rents in his clothes as easily as out of the gills of a fish.

The minister stood with unshaken confidence on the bank. He ran peat water like a spout in a thunder plump, and black rivulets of dye were trickling from under his hat down his brow and dripping from the end of his nose.

'Then you'll not come any farther?' he called cross to the precentor.

'I canna, oh, I canna; though I'm most awfu' wullin'. Kirsty wad never forgie me gin I was to droon.'

'Then I'll e'en have to raise the tune myself—though three times "Kilmarneck" is a pity,' said the minister, turning on his heel and striding away through the shallow sea, splashing the water as high as his head with a kind of headstrong glee which seemed to the precentor a direct defiance of Providence. Ebie Kirgan followed half a dozen steps behind. The support of the precentor's lay semi-equality taken from him, he began to regret that he had come, and silently and ruefully plunged along after the minister through the waterlogged meadows. They came in

THE LAMMAS PREACHING

time to the foot of Robert Kirk's march dyke, and skirted it a hundred yards upward to avoid the deep pool in which the Laneburn waters were swirling. The minister climbed silently up the seven-foot dyke, pausing a second on the top to balance himself for his leap to the other side. As he did so Ebie Kirgan saw that the dyke was swaying to the fall, having been weakened by the rush of water on the farther side. He ran instantly at the minister, and gave him a push with both hands which caused Mr. Maclellan to alight on his feet clear of the falling stones. The dyke did not so much fall outward as settle down on its own ruins. Ebie fell on his face among the stones with the impetus of his own eagerness. He arose, however, quickly—only limping slightly from what he called a 'bit chack' on the leg between two stones.

'That was a merciful providence, Ebenezer,' said the minister, solemnly; 'I hope you are duly thankful!'

'Dod, I am that!' replied Ebie, scratching his head vigorously with his right hand and rubbing his leg with his left. 'Gin I hadna g'ien ye that dunch, ye micht hae preachen nane at Cauldshaws this nicht.'

They now crossed a fairly level clover field, dark and laid with wet. The scent of the clover rose to their nostrils with almost overpowering force. There was not a breath of air. The sky was blue and the sun shining. Only a sullen roar came over the hill, sounding in the silence like the rush of a train over a far-away viaduct.

'What is that?' queried the minister, stopping to listen.

Ebie took a brisk sidelong look at him.

'I'm some dootsome that'll be the Skyreburn coming doon aff o' Cairnsmuir!'

The minister tramped unconcernedly on. Ebie Kirgan stared at him.

'He canna ken what a "Skyreburn warnin'" is—he'll be thinkin' it's some bit Machars burn that the laddies set their whurlie mills in. But he'll turn richt eneuch when he sees Skyreburn roarin' reed in a Lammas flood, I'm thinkin'!'

They took their way over the shoulder of the hill in the beautiful evening, leaning eagerly forward to get the first glimpse of the cause of that deep and resonant roar. In a

S. R. CROCKETT

moment they saw below them a narrow rock-walled gully, ten or fifteen yards across, filled to the brim with rushing water. It was not black peat water like the Camelon Lane, but it ran red as keel, flecked now and then with a revolving white blur as one of the Cauldshaws sheep spun downward to the sea, with four black feet turned pitifully up to the blue sky.

Ebie looked at the minister. 'He'll turn noo if he's mortal,' he said. But the minister held on. He looked at the water up and down the roaring stream. On a hill above, the farmer of Cauldshaws, having driven all his remaining sheep together, sat down to watch. Seeing the minister, he stood up and excitedly waved him back. But Douglas Maclellan from the Machars never gave him a look, and his shouting was of less effect than if he had been crying to an untrained collie.

The minister looked long up the stream, and at a point where the rocks came very close together, and many stunted pines were growing, he saw one which, having stood on the immediate brink, had been so much undercut that it leaned over the gully like a fishing-rod. With a keen glance along its length, the minister, jamming his dripping soft felt hat on the back of his head, was setting foot on the perilous slope of the uneven red-brown trunk, when Ebie Kirgan caught him sharply by the arm.

'It's no' for me to speak to a minister at ordinar' times,' he stammered, gathering courage in his desperation; 'but, oh, man, it's fair murder to try to gang ower that water!'

The minister wrenched himself free, and sprang along the trunk with wonderful agility.

'I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws this night, and my text is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might!"' he shouted.

He made his way up and up the slope of the fir tree, which, having little grip of the rock, dipped and swayed under his tread. Ebie Kirgan fell on his knees and prayed aloud. He had not prayed since his stepmother boxed his ears for getting into bed without saying his prayers twenty years ago. This had set him against it. But he prayed now, and to infinitely more purpose than his minister had recently

THE LAMMAS PREACHING

done. But when the climber had reached the branchy top, and was striving to get a few feet farther, in order to clear the surging linn before he made his spring, Ebie rose to his feet, leaving his prayer unfinished. He sent forth an almost animal shriek of terror. The tree roots cracked like breaking cables and slowly gave way, an avalanche of stones plumped into the whirl, and the top of the fir crashed downwards on the rocks of the opposite bank.

'Oh, man, call on the name of the Lord!' cried Ebie Kirgan, the ragged preacher, at the top of his voice.

Then he saw something detach itself from the tree as it rebounded, and for a moment rise and fall black against the sunset. Then Ebie the Outcast fell on his face like a dead man.

In the white coverleted 'room' of the farmtown of Cauldshaws, a white-faced lad lay with his eyes closed, and a wet cloth on his brow. A large-boned, red-cheeked, motherly woman stole to and fro with a foot as light as a fairy. The sleeper stirred and tried to lift an unavailing hand to his head. The mistress of Cauldshaws stole to his bedside as he opened his eyes. She laid a restraining hand on him as he strove to rise.

'Let me up,' said the minister, 'I must away, for I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'My bonny man,' said the goodwife, tenderly, 'you'll preach best on the broad o' yer back this mony a day, an' when ye rise your best text will be, "He sent from above, He took me, and drew me out of many waters!"'

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

BY F. ANSTEY

Author of "Vice Versa," etc.

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

By F. ANSTEY.

Author of "Vice Versa," etc.

FREDERICK FLUSHINGTON belonged to a small college, and in doing so conferred upon it one of the few distinctions it could boast—namely, that of possessing the very bashfullest man in the whole university. But his college did not treat him with any excess of adulation on that account, probably from a prudent fear of rubbing the bloom off his modesty; they allowed him to blush unseen—which was the condition in which he preferred to blush.

He felt himself oppressed by a paucity of ideas and a difficulty in knowing which way to look in the presence of his fellow-men, which made him never so happy as when he had fastened his outer door and secured himself from all possibility of intrusion; though it was almost an unnecessary precaution, for nobody ever thought of coming to see Flushington.

In appearance he was a man of middle height, with a long scraggy neck and a large head, which gave him the air of being much shorter than he really was; he had little, weak eyes, a nose and mouth of no particular shape, and very smooth hair of no definite color. He had a timid, deprecating air, which seemed due to the consciousness that he was an uninteresting anomaly, and he certainly was as impervious to the ordinary influence of his surroundings as any undergraduate well could be. He lived a colorless, aimless life in his little rooms under the roof, reading every morning from nine till two with a superstitiously mechanical regularity, though very often his books completely failed to convey any ideas whatever to his brain, which was not a particularly powerful organ.

If the afternoon was fine he generally sought out his one friend, who was a few degrees less shy than himself, and they took a monosyllabic walk together; or if it was wet, he read

F. ANSTEY

the papers at the Union, and in the evening after hall he studied "general literature" (a graceful term for novels) or laboriously spelt out a sonata upon his piano—a habit which did not increase his popularity.

Fortunately for Flushington, he had no gyp, or his life might have been made a positive burden to him, and with his bedmaker he was rather a favorite as "a gentleman what gave no trouble"—meaning that, when he observed his sherry unaccountably sinking, like the water in a lock when the sluices are up, Flushington was too delicate to refer to the phenomenon.

He was sitting one afternoon over his modest lunch of bread and butter, potted meat and lemonade, when all at once he heard a sound of unusual voices and a strange flutter of dresses coming up the winding stone staircase outside, and was instantly seized with a cold dread.

There was no particular reason for being alarmed, although there were certainly ladies mounting the steps. Probably they were friends of the man opposite, who was always having his people up; but still Flushington had that odd presentiment which nervous people have sometimes that something unpleasant is on its way to them, and he half rose from his chair to shut his outer oak.

It was too late; the dresses were rustling now in his very passage; there was a pause, a few faint, smothered laughs and little feminine coughs—then two taps at the door.

"Come in," cried Flushington, faintly; he wished he had been reading anything but the work by M. Zola, which was propped up in front of him. It is your mild man, who frequently has a taste for seeing the less reputable side of life in this second-hand way, and Flushington would toll manfully through the voluminous pages, hunting up every third word in the dictionary; with a sense of injury when, as was often the case, it was not to be found. Still, there was a sort of intellectual orgie about it which had strong fascinations for him, while he knew enough of the language to be aware when the incidents approached the improper, though he was not always able to see quite clearly in what this impropriety consisted.

The door opened, and his heart seemed to stop, and all

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

the blood rushed violently to his head as a large lady came sweeping in, her face rippling with a broad smile of affection.

She horrified Flushington, who knew nobody with the least claim to smile at him so expansively as that; he drank lemonade to conceal his confusion.

"You know me, my dear Fred?" she said, easily. "Of course not—how should you? I'm—for goodness sake, my dear boy, don't look so terribly frightened! I'm your aunt—your aunt Amelia, come over from Australia!"

The shock was a severe one to Flushington, who had not even known he possessed such a relative; he could only say, "Oh?" which he felt even then was scarcely a warm greeting to give an aunt from the Antipodes.

"Oh, but," she added, cheerily, "that's not all; I've another surprise for you: the dear girls would insist on coming up, too, to see their grand college cousin; they're just outside. I'll call them in—shall I?"

In another second Flushington's small room was overrun by a horde of female relatives, while he looked on gasping.

They were pretty girls, too, many of them; but that was all the more dreadful to him: he did not mind the plainer ones half so much; a combination of beauty and intellect reduced him to a condition of absolute imbecility.

He was once caught and introduced to a charming young lady from Newnham, and all he could do was to back feebly into a corner and murmur "Thank you," repeatedly.

He was very little better than that then as his aunt singled out one girl after another. "We won't have any formal nonsense between cousins," she said; "you know them all by name already, I dare say. This is Milly; that's Jane; here's Flora, and Kitty, and Margaret; and that's my little Thomasina over there by the book-case."

Poor Flushington ducked blindly in the direction of each, and then to them all collectively: he had not presence of mind to offer them chairs or cake, or anything; and besides, there was not nearly enough of anything for all of them.

Meanwhile, his aunt had spread herself comfortably out in his armchair, and was untying her bonnet-strings and beaming at him until he was ready to expire with confusion. "I do think," she observed at last, "that when an old

F. ANSTEY

aunt all the way from Australia takes the trouble to come and see you like this, you might spare her just one kiss!"

Flushington dared not refuse; he tottered up and kissed her somewhere about the face, after which he did not know which way to look, he was so terribly afraid that he might have to go through the same ceremony with his cousins, which he simply could not have survived.

Happily for him, they did not appear to expect it and he balanced a chair on its hind legs and, resting one knee upon it, waited patiently for them to begin a conversation; he could not have uttered a single word.

The aunt came to his rescue: "You don't ask after your Uncle Samuel, who used to send you the beetles?" she said, reprovingly.

"No," said Flushington, who had forgotten Uncle Samuel and his beetles, too; "no, how is Uncle Samuel—quite well, I hope?"

"Only tolerably so, thank you, Fred; you see, he never got over his great loss."

"No," said Flushington desperately, "of course not; it was a—large sum of money to lose at once."

"I was not referring to money," said she, with a slight touch of stoniness in her manner; "I was alluding to the death of your Cousin John."

Flushington had felt himself getting on rather well just before that, but this awkward mistake—for he could not recollect having heard of Cousin John before—threw him off his balance again; he collapsed into silence once more, inwardly resolving to be lured into no more questions concerning relatives.

His ignorance seemed to have aroused pathetic sentiments in his aunt. "I ought to have known," she said, shaking her head, "they'd soon forget us in the old country; here's my own sister's son, and he doesn't remember his cousin's death! Well, well, now we're here, we must see if we can't know one another a little better. Fred, you must take the girls and me everywhere and show us everything, like a good nephew, you know."

Flushington had a horrible mental vision of himself careering about all Cambridge, followed by a long proces-

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

sion of female relatives—a fearful possibility to so shy a man. “Shall you be here long?” he asked.

“Only a week or so; we’re at the ‘Bull,’ very near you, you see; and I’m afraid you think us very bold beggars, Fred, but we’re going to ask you to give us something to eat. I’ve set my heart, so have the girls (haven’t you, dears?), on lunching once with a college student in his own room.”

“There’s nothing so extraordinary in it, I assure you,” protested Flushington, “and—and I’m afraid there’s very little for you to eat. The kitchen and buttery are closed” (he said this at a venture, as he felt absolutely unequal to facing the college cook and ordering lunch from that tremendous personage; he would rather order it from his own tutor, even). “But, if you don’t mind potted ham, there’s a little at the bottom of this tin, and there’s some bread and an inch of butter, and marmalade, and a few biscuits. And there was some sherry this morning.”

The girls all professed themselves very hungry and contented with anything; so they sat around the table, and poor Flushington served out meagre rations of all the provisions he could find, even to his figs and French plums; but there was not nearly enough to go round, and they lunched with evident disillusionment, thinking that the college luxury of which they had heard so much had been greatly exaggerated.

During luncheon the aunt began to study Flushington’s features attentively. “There’s a strong look of poor, dear Simon about him when he smiles,” she said, looking at him through her gold double glasses. “There, did you catch it, girls? Just his mother’s profile (turn your face a leetle more towards the window, so as to get the light on your nose). Don’t you see the likeness to your aunt’s portrait, girls?”

And Flushington had to sit still with all the girls’ charming eyes fixed critically upon his crimson countenance; he longed to be able to slide down under the table and evade them, but of course he was obliged to remain above.

“He’s got dear Caroline’s nose!” the aunt went on triumphantly; and the cousins agreed that he certainly had Caroline’s nose, which made Flushington feel vaguely that he ought at least to offer to return it.

F. ANSTEY

Presently one of the girls whispered to her mother, who laughed indulgently. "What do you think this silly child wants me to ask you now, Fred?" she said. "She says she would so like to see what you look like with your college cap and gown on. Will you put them on, just to please her?"

So Flushington had to put them on and walk slowly up and down the room in them, feeling all the time what a dismal spectacle he was making of himself, while the girls were plainly disappointed, and remarked that somehow they had thought the academical costume more becoming.

Then began a hotly-maintained catechism upon his studies, his amusements, his friends and his mode of life generally, which he met with uneasy shiftings and short, timid answers that they did not appear to think altogether satisfactory.

Indeed, the aunt, who by this time felt the potted ham beginning to disagree with her, asked him, with something of severity in her tone, whether he went to church regularly; and he said that he didn't go to church, but was always regular at chapel.

On this she observed coldly that she was sorry to hear her nephew was a Dissenter; and Flushington was much too shy to attempt to explain the misunderstanding; he sat quiet and felt miserable, while there was another uncomfortable pause.

The cousins were whispering together and laughing over little private jokes, and he, after the manner of sensitive men, of course imagined they were laughing at him—and perhaps he was not very far wrong on this occasion. So he was growing hotter and hotter every second, inwardly cursing his whole race and wishing that his father had been a foundling—when there came another tap at the door.

"Why, that must be poor old Sophy!" said his aunt. "Fred, you remember old Sophy—no, you can't; you were only a baby when she came to live with us, but she'll remember you. She begged so hard to be taken, and so we told her she might come on here slowly after us."

And then an old person in a black bonnet came feebly in, and was considerably affected when she saw Flushington. "To think," she quavered, "to think as my dim old eyes

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

should see the child I've nursed on my lap growed out into a college gentleman!" And she hugged Flushington and wept on his shoulder till he was almost cataleptic with confusion.

But as she grew calmer she became more critical; she confessed to a certain feeling of disappointment with Flushington; he had not filled out, she said, "so fine as he'd promised to fill out." And when she asked if he recollected how he wouldn't be washed unless they put his little wooden horse on the washstand, and what a business it was to make him swallow his castor-oil, it made Flushington feel like a fool.

This was quite bad enough, but at last the girls began to go round his rooms, exclaiming at everything, admiring his pipe and umbrella racks, his buffalo horns and his quaint wooden kettle-holder, until they happened to come upon his French novel; and, being unsophisticated colonial girls with a healthy ignorance of such literature, they wanted Flushington to tell them what it was all about.

His presence of mind had gone long before, and this demand threw him into a violent perspiration; he could not invent, and he was painfully racking his brains to find some portion of the tale which would bear repetition—when there was another knock at the door.

At this Flushington was perfectly dumb with horror; he prepared himself blankly for another aunt with a fresh relay of female cousins, or more old family servants who had washed him in his infancy, and he sat there cowering.

But when the door opened a tall, fair-haired, good-looking young fellow, who from his costume had evidently just come up from the tennis-court, came bursting in impulsively.

"Oh, I say!" he began, "have you heard—have you seen? Oh, beg pardon, didn't see, you know!" he added, as he noticed the extraordinary fact that Flushington had people up.

"Oh, let me introduce you," said Flushington, with a vague idea that this was the proper thing to do. "Mr. Lushington, Mrs.—no, I don't know her name—my aunt—my cousins."

The young man, who had just been about to retire, bowed

F. ANSTEY

and stared with a sudden surprise. "Do you know," he said slowly to the other, "I rather think that's my aunt!"

"I—I'm afraid not," whispered Flushington; "she seems quite sure she's mine."

"Well, I've got an aunt and cousins I've never seen before coming up to-day," said the new-comer, "and yours is uncommonly like the portrait of mine."

"If they belong to you, do take them away!" said Flushington feebly; "I don't think I can keep up much longer."

"What are you whispering about, Fred?" cried the aunt. "Is it something we are not to know?"

"He says he thinks there's been a mistake, and you're not my aunt," explained Flushington.

"Oh, does he?" she said, drawing herself up indignantly. "And what does he know about it? I didn't catch his name—who is he?"

"Fred Lushington," he said; "that's my name."

"And who are you, if he's Fred Lushington?" she inquired, turning upon the unfortunate owner of the rooms.

"I'm Frederick Flushington," he stammered; "I'm sorry—but I can't help it!"

"Then you're not my nephew at all, sir!" cried the aunt.

"Thank you very much," said Flushington gratefully.

"You see," her real nephew was explaining to her, "there isn't much light on the staircase, and you must have thought his name over the door was 'F. Lushington,' so in you went, you know! The porter told me you'd been asking for me, so I looked in here to see whether you had been heard of, and here you are."

"But why didn't he tell me?" she said, for she was naturally annoyed to find that she had been pouring out all her pent-up affection over a perfect stranger, and she even had a dim idea that she had put herself in rather a ridiculous position, which of course made her feel very angry with Flushington. "Why couldn't he explain before matters had gone on so far?"

"How was I to know?" pleaded Flushington. "I dare say I have aunts in Australia, and you said you were one of them."

"But you asked after Uncle Samuel?" she said accusingly.

AN UNDERGRADUATE'S AUNT

"You must have had some object—I cannot say what—in encouraging my mistake; oh, I'm sure of it!"

"You told me to ask after him," said the unhappy Flushing-ton; "I thought it was all right. What else was I to do?"

The cousins were whispering and laughing together all this time and regarding their new cousin with shy admiration, very different from the manner in which they had looked at poor Flushing-ton; and the old nurse, too, was overjoyed and declared that she felt sure from the first that her Master Frederick had not turned out so undersized as him—meaning Flushing-ton.

"Yes, yes," said Lushington hastily, "quite a mistake on both sides. Quite sure Flushing-ton isn't the man to go and intercept any fellow's aunt."

"I wouldn't have done it for worlds, if I had known!" he protested very sincerely.

"Well," she said, a little mollified, "I am very sorry we've all disturbed you like this, Mr.—Mr. Flushing-ton" (the unlucky man said something about not minding it now); "and now, Fred, perhaps you will show us the way to the right rooms?"

"Come along, then!" said he; "I'll run down and tell them to send up some lunch" (they did not explain that they had lunched already). "You come, too, Flushing-ton, and then after lunch you and I will row the ladies up to Byron's Pool?"

"Yes, do come, Mr. Flushing-ton," the ladies said kindly.


But Flushing-ton wriggled out of it. To begin with, he did not consider he knew his neighbor sufficiently well; besides, he had had enough of female society for one day.

Indeed, long after that, he would be careful in fastening his door about luncheon-time, and if he saw any person in Cambridge who looked as if she might by any possibility turn out to be a relation, he would flee down a back street.

THE SILHOUETTES
BY A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

THE SILHOUETTES

By A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

HE small round gentleman who had come all the way to Gantick village from the extreme south of France, and had blown his flageolet all day in Gantick street without exciting its population in the least, was disgusted. Toward dusk he crossed the stile which divides Sanctuary Lane from the churchyard and pausing, with a leg on each side of the bar, shook his fist back at the village, which lay below, its gray roofs and red chimneys just distinguishable here and there, between a foamy sea of apple-blossom and a haze of bluish smoke. He could not very well shake its dust off his feet, for this was hardly separable from the dust of many other places on his boots, and also it was mostly mud. But his gesture betokened extreme malevolence.

"These Cor-rnishmen," he said, "are pigs all. There is not a Cor-rnishman that is not a big pig."

He lifted the second leg wearily over the bar.

"As for Art—phit! Moreover, they shut up their churches."

This was really a serious matter for he had not a penny-piece in his pocket, the last had gone to buy a loaf—and there was no lodging to be had in the village. The month was April, a bad time to sleep in the open; and though the night drew in tranquilly upon a day of broad sunshine, the earth had by no means sucked in the late heavy rains. The church-porch, however, had a broad bench on either side and faced the south, away from the prevailing wind. He had made a mental note of this early in the day, being schooled to anticipate such straits as the present. As he passed up the narrow path between the graves, with a gait like a limping hare's, he scanned his surroundings carefully.

The churchyard was narrow and surrounded by a high gray wall, mostly hidden by an inner belt of well-grown cypresses. At one point the ranks of these trees were broken

A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

for some forty feet, and here the back of a small dwelling-house abutted on the cemetery. There was one window only in the yellow-washed wall, and this window looked straight on the church-porch. The flageolet-player regarded it with suspicion; but the casement was shut and the blind drawn down. The aspect of the cottage, too, proclaimed that its inhabitants were very poor folk—not at all the sort to tell tales upon a casual tramp if they spied him bivouacking upon holy ground.

He limped into the porch and cast off the blue bag that was strapped upon his shoulders. Out of it he drew a sheep's-wool cape, worn very thin, and then turned the bag inside out, on the chance of discovering a forgotten crust. The search disappointed him, but he took it calmly—being on the whole a sweet-tempered man and not easily angered, except by an affront to his vanity. His violent indignation against the people of Gantick arose from their indifference to his playing. Had they even run out at their doors to listen and stare, he would not have minded their stinginess.

He that cannot eat had best sleep. The little man passed the flat of his hand, in the dusky light, over the two benches, and having chosen the one with fewest asperities on its surface, tossed his bag and flageolet upon the other, pulled off his boots, folded his cape to make a pillow, and stretched himself at length. In less than ten minutes he was sleeping dreamlessly.

Over his head there hung a board containing a list or two of the parish ratepayers, and the usual notice of the spring training of the Royal Cornwall Rangers' militia. This last placard had broken from two of its fastenings, and, toward midnight was rustled by an eddy of the light wind so loudly as to wake the sleeper.

He sat upright and lowered his bare feet upon the pavement. Outside, the blue firmament was full of stars, sparkling unevenly, as though the wind was trying in sport to extinguish them. In the eaves of the porch he could hear the martins rustling in the crevices that they had come back, but a few days since, to warm again. But what drew the man to the entrance was the window in the cottage over the wall.

The lattice was pushed back and the room inside was

THE SILHOUETTES

brightly lit. But a white sheet had been stretched right across the window between him and the lamp. And on this sheet two quick hands were waving all kinds of clever shadows, shaping them, moving them and reshaping them with the speed of lightning.

It was certainly a remarkable performance. The shadows took the form of rabbits, swans, foxes, elephants, fairies, sailors with wooden legs, old women who smoked pipes, ballet-girls who pirouetted, twirling harlequins and the profiles of eminent statesmen—and all made with two hands and, at the most, the help of a tiny stick or piece of string. They danced and capered, grew large and then small, with such odd turns and changes that the flageolet-player could hardly hold his laughter. He remarked that the hands, whenever they were disentwined for a moment, appeared to be very small and plump.

After about ten minutes the display ceased and the shadow of a woman's head and neck crossed the sheet, which was presently drawn back at one corner.

"Is that any better?" asked a woman's voice, low but distinct.

The flageolet-player started and bent his eyes lower across the graves and into the shadow beneath the window. For the first time he grew aware that a figure stood there, a little way out from the wall. As well as he could see, it was a young boy.

"That was beautiful, mother. You can't think how you've improved at it this week."

"Any mistakes?"

"The harlequin and columbine seemed a little stiff; but that's the hardest of all, I know."

"Never mind; they've got to be perfect. We'll try them again."

She was about to drop the corner of the sheet when the listener sprang out toward the window, leaping with bare feet over the graves and waving his flageolet madly.

"Ah, no—no, madame!" he cried. "Wait one moment, the tiniest, and I shall inspire you!"

"Whoever is that?" cried the voice at the window, rising almost to a scream.

A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

The youth beneath the wall faced round on the intruder. He had turned white and wanted to run, but mastered his voice to inquire gruffly:

"Who the devil are you?"

"I? I am an artist, and as such I salute madame and monsieur, her son. She is greater artist than I, but I shall help her. Her harlequin and columbine shall dance better this time. Why? Because they shall dance to my music, the music that I shall make, here, on this spot, under the stars. I shall play as if possessed—I feel that. I bet you. It is because I have found an artist—an artist in Gantick! O—my—good—Lor!"

He had pulled off his greasy hat, and stood bowing and smiling, showing his white teeth, and holding up his flageolet for the woman to see and convince herself.

"That's all very well," said the boy; "but my mother doesn't want it known yet that she practices at these shadows."

"Ha? It is perhaps forbidden by law."

"Since you have found us out, sir," said the woman, "I will tell you why we are behaving like this, and trust you to tell nobody. I have been left a widow, in great poverty and with this one son, who must be educated as well as his father was. Six months ago, when sadly perplexed, I found out by chance that this small gift of mine might earn me a good income at a—a music hall. Richard, of course, doesn't like my performing at such places, but agrees with me that he must be educated. So we are hiding it from everybody in the village, because we have always been respected here; and, as soon as I have practiced enough, we mean to travel up to London. Of course I shall change my name, and nobody will——"

But the flageolet-player sat suddenly down upon a grave and broke into hysterical laughter.

"Oh—oh—oh! Quick, madame! dance your pretty figures while yet I laugh and before I curse. O stars and planets, look down on this mad world and help me play! And, O monsieur, pardon me if I laugh; for that either you or I are mad is a cock-sure. Dance, madame——"

He put the flageolet to his lips and blew. In a moment

THE SILHOUETTES

or two harlequin and columbine appeared on the screen and began to caper nimbly, naturally, with the wildest grace. The tune was a merry reel and soon began to inspire the performer above. Her small dancers in a twinkling turned into a gamboling elephant, then to a couple of tripping fairies. A moment after, they were flower and butterfly, then a jigging donkey; then harlequin and columbine again. With each fantastic change the tune quickened and the dance grew wilder, till, tired out, the woman spread her hands wide against the sheet, as if imploring mercy.

The player tossed his flageolet over a headstone and rolled back on the grave in a paroxysm of laughter. Above him the rooks had poured out of their nests and were calling to each other.

"Monsieur," he gasped at last, sitting up and wiping his eyes, "was it good this time?"

"It was quite different, I'll own."

"Then could you spare from the house one little crust of bread? For I am famished."

The youth returned, in a couple of minutes, with some bread and cold bacon.


"Of course," he said, "if you should meet either of us in the village to-morrow you will not recognize us."

The little man bowed. "I agree," said he, "with your mother, monsieur, that you must be educated at all costs."

MY BROTHER HENRY
GILRAY'S FLOWER-POT
BY J. M. BARRIE

MY BROTHER HENRY

By J. M. BARRIE

TRICTLY speaking I never had a brother Henry, and yet I can not say that Henry was an impostor. He came into existence in a curious way, and I can think of him now without malice as a child of smoke. The first I heard of Henry was at Pettigrew's house, which is in a London suburb, so conveniently situated that I can go there and back in one day. I was testing some new Cabanas, I remember, when Pettigrew remarked that he had been lunching with a man who knew my brother Henry. Not having any brother but Alexander, I felt that Pettigrew had mistaken the name. "Oh, no," Pettigrew said; "he spoke of Alexander too." Even this did not convince me, and I asked my host for his friend's name. Scudamour was the name of the man, and he had met my brothers Alexander and Henry years before in Paris. Then I remembered Scudamour, and I probably frowned, for I myself was my own brother Henry. I distinctly recalled Scudamour meeting Alexander and me in Paris, and calling me Henry, though my name begins with a J. I explained the mistake to Pettigrew, and here, for the time being, the matter rested. However, I had by no means heard the last of Henry.

Several times afterward I heard from various persons that Scudamour wanted to meet me because he knew my brother Henry. At last we did meet, in Jimmy's chambers; and, almost as soon as he saw me, Scudamour asked where Henry was now. This was precisely what I feared. I am a man who always looks like a boy. There are few persons of my age in London who retain their boyish appearance as long as I have done; indeed, this is the curse of my life. Though I am approaching the age of thirty, I pass for twenty; and I have observed old gentlemen frown at my precocity when I said a good thing or helped myself to a

J. M. BARRIE

second glass of wine. There was, therefore, nothing surprising in Scudamour's remark, that, when he had the pleasure of meeting Henry, Henry must have been about the age that I had now reached. All would have been well had I explained the real state of affairs to this annoying man; but, unfortunately for myself, I loathe entering upon explanations to anybody about anything. This it is to smoke the Arcadia. When I ring for a time-table and William John brings coals instead, I accept the coals as a substitute.

Much, then, did I dread a discussion with Scudamour, his surprise when he heard that I was Henry, and his comments on my youthful appearance. Besides, I was smoking the best of all mixtures. There was no likelihood of my meeting Scudamour again, so the easiest way to get rid of him seemed to be to humor him. I therefore told him that Henry was in India, married, and doing well. "Remember me to Henry when you write to him," was Scudamour's last remark to me that evening.

A few weeks later some one tapped me on the shoulder in Oxford Street. It was Scudamour. "Heard from Henry?" he asked. I said I had heard by the last mail. "Anything particular in the letter?" I felt it would not do to say that there was nothing particular in a letter which had come all the way from India, so I hinted that Henry was having trouble with his wife. By this I meant that her health was bad; but he took it up in another way, and I did not set him right. "Ah, ah!" he said, shaking his head sagaciously; "I'm sorry to hear that. Poor Henry!" "Poor old boy!" was all I could think of replying. "How about the children?" Scudamour asked. "Oh, the children," I said, with what I thought presence of mind, "are coming to England." "To stay with Alexander?" he asked. My answer was that Alexander was expecting them by the middle of next month; and eventually Scudamour went away muttering, "Poor Henry!" In a month or so we met again. "No word of Henry's getting leave of absence?" asked Scudamour. I replied shortly that Henry had gone to live in Bombay, and would not be home for years. He saw that I was brusk, so what does he do but draw me aside for a quiet explana-

MY BROTHER HENRY

tion. "I suppose," he said, "you are annoyed because I told Pettigrew that Henry's wife had run away from him. The fact is, I did it for your good. You see, I happened to make a remark to Pettigrew about your brother Henry, and he said that there was no such person. Of course I laughed at that, and pointed out not only that I had the pleasure of Henry's acquaintance, but that you and I had talked about the old fellow every time we met. 'Well,' Pettigrew said, 'this is a most remarkable thing; for he,' meaning you, 'said to me in this very room, sitting in that very chair, that Alexander was his only brother.' I saw that Pettigrew resented your concealing the existence of your brother Henry from him, so I thought the most friendly thing I could do was to tell him that your reticence was doubtless due to the unhappy state of poor Henry's private affairs. Naturally in the circumstances you did not want to talk about Henry." I shook Scudamour by the hand, telling him that he had acted judiciously; but if I could have stabbed him in the back at that moment I dare say I would have done it.

I did not see Scudamour again for a long time, for I took care to keep out of his way; but I heard first from him and then of him. One day he wrote to me saying that his nephew was going to Bombay, and would I be so good as to give the youth an introduction to my brother Henry? He also asked me to dine with him and his nephew. I declined the dinner, but I sent the nephew the required note of introduction to Henry. The next I heard of Scudamour was from Pettigrew. "By the way," said Pettigrew, "Scudamour is in Edinburgh at present." I trembled, for Edinburgh is where Alexander lives. "What has taken him there?" I asked, with assumed carelessness. Pettigrew believed it was business; "but," he added, "Scudamour asked me to tell you that he meant to call on Alexander, as he was anxious to see Henry's children." A few days afterward I had a telegram from Alexander, who generally uses this means of communication when he corresponds with me.

"Do you know a man, Scudamour? Reply," was what Alexander said. I thought of answering that we had met a man of that name when we were in Paris; but after con-

MY BROTHER HENRY

sideration, I replied boldly: "Know no one of name of Scudamour."

About two months ago I passed Scudamour in Regent Street, and he scowled at me. This I could have borne if there had been no more of Henry; but I knew that Scudamour was now telling everybody about Henry's wife.

By and by I got a letter from an old friend of Alexander's asking me if there was any truth in a report that Alexander was going to Bombay. Soon afterward Alexander wrote to me saying he had been told by several persons that I was going to Bombay. In short, I saw that the time had come for killing Henry. So I told Pettigrew that Henry had died of fever, deeply regretted; and asked him to be sure to tell Scudamour, who had always been interested in the deceased's welfare. Pettigrew afterward told me that he had communicated the sad intelligence to Scudamour. "How did he take it?" I asked. "Well," Pettigrew said, reluctantly, "he told me that when he was up in Edinburgh he did not get on well with Alexander. But he expressed great curiosity as to Henry's children." "Ah," I said, "the children were both drowned in the Forth; a sad affair—we can't bear to talk of it." I am not likely to see much of Scudamour again, nor is Alexander. Scudamour now goes about saying that Henry was the only one of us he really liked.

GILRAY'S FLOWER-POT

By J. M. BARRIE

I CHARGE Gilray's unreasonableness to his ignoble passion for cigarettes; and the story of his flower-pot has therefore an obvious moral. The want of dignity he displayed about that flower-pot, on his return to London, would have made any one sorry for him. I had my own work to look after, and really could not be tending his chrysanthemum all day. After he came back, however, there was no reasoning with him, and I admit that I never did water his plant, though always intending to do so.

The great mistake was in not leaving the flower-pot in charge of William John. No doubt I readily promised to attend to it, but Gilray deceived me by speaking as if the watering of a plant was the merest pastime. He had to leave London for a short provincial tour, and, as I see now, took advantage of my good nature.

As Gilray had owned his flower-pot for several months, during which time (I take him at his word) he had watered it daily, he must have known he was misleading me. He said that you got into the way of watering a flower-pot regularly just as you wind up your watch. That certainly is not the case. I always wind up my watch, and I never watered the flower-pot. Of course, if I had been living in Gilray's rooms with the thing always before my eyes I might have done so. I proposed to take it into my chambers at the time, but he would not hear of that. Why? How Gilray came by this chrysanthemum I do not inquire, but whether, in the circumstances, he should not have made a clean breast of it to me is another matter. Undoubtedly it was an unusual thing to put a man to the trouble of watering a chrysanthemum daily without giving him its history. My own belief has always been that he got it in exchange for a pair of boots and his old dressing-gown. He hints that it was a present; but, as one who knows him well, I may say

J. M. BARRIE

that he is the last person a lady would be likely to give a chrysanthemum to. Besides, if he was so proud of the plant he should have stayed at home and watered it himself.

He says that I never meant to water it, which is not only a mistake, but unkind. My plan was to run downstairs immediately after dinner every evening and give it a thorough watering. One thing or another, however, came in the way. I often remembered about the chrysanthemum while I was in the office; but even Gilray could hardly have expected me to ask leave of absence merely to run home and water his plant. You must draw the line somewhere, even in a government office. When I reached home I was tired, inclined to take things easily, and not at all in a proper condition for watering flower-pots. Then Arcadiana would drop in. I put it to any sensible man or woman, could I have been expected to give up my friends for the sake of a chrysanthemum? Again, it was my custom of an evening, if not disturbed, to retire with my pipe into my cane chair, and there pass the hours communing with great minds, or, when the mood was on me, trifling with a novel. Often when I was in the middle of a chapter Gilray's flower-pot stood up before my eyes crying for water. He does not believe this, but it is the solemn truth. At those moments it was touch and go, whether I watered his chrysanthemum or not. Where I lost myself was in not hurrying to his rooms at once with a tumbler. I said to myself that I would go when I had finished my pipe, but by that time the flower-pot has escaped my memory. This may have been weakness; all I know is that I should have saved myself much annoyance if I had risen and watered the chrysanthemum there and then. But would it not have been rather hard on me to have had to forsake my books for the sake of Gilray's flowers and flower-pots and plants and things? What right has a man to go and make a garden of his chambers?

All the three weeks he was away, Gilray kept pestering me with letters about his chrysanthemum. He seemed to have no faith in me—a detestable thing in a man who calls himself your friend. I had promised to water his flower-pot; and between friends a promise is surely sufficient. It

GILRAY'S FLOWER-POT

is not so, however, when Gilray is one of them. I soon hated the sight of my name in his handwriting. It was not as if he said outright that he wrote entirely to know whether I was watering his plant. His references to it were introduced with all the appearance of after-thoughts. Often they took the form of postscripts: "By the way, are you watering my chrysanthemum?" or, "The chrysanthemum ought to be a beauty by this time;" or, "You must be quite an adept now at watering plants." Gilray declares now that, in answer to one of these ingenious epistles, I wrote to him saying that "I had just been watering his chrysanthemum." My belief is that I did no such thing; or, if I did, I meant to water it as soon as I had finished my letter. He has never been able to bring this home to me, he says, because he burned my correspondence. As if a business man would destroy such a letter. It was yet more annoying when Gilray took to post-cards. To hear the postman's knock and then discover, when you are expecting an important communication, that it is only a post-card about a flower-pot—that is really too bad. And then I consider that some of the post-cards bordered upon insult. One of them said, "What about chrysanthemum?—reply at once." This was just like Gilray's overbearing way; but I answered politely, and so far as I knew, truthfully, "Chrysanthemum all right."

Knowing that there was no explaining things to Gilray, I redoubled my exertions to water his flower-pot as the day for his return drew near. Once, indeed, when I rang for water, I could not for the life of me remember what I wanted it for when it was brought. Had I had any forethought I should have left the tumbler stand just as it was to show it to Gilray on his return. But, unfortunately, William John had misunderstood what I wanted the water for, and put a decanter down beside it. Another time I was actually on the stair rushing to Gilray's door, when I met the housekeeper, and, stopping to talk to her, lost my opportunity again. To show how honestly anxious I was to fulfil my promise, I need only add that I was several times awakened in the watches of the night by a haunting consciousness that I had forgotten to water Gilray's flower-pot. On these occasions I spared no trouble to remember again

GILRAY'S FLOWER-POT

in the morning. I reached out of bed to a chair and turned it upside down, so that the sight of it when I rose might remind me that I had something to do. With the same object I crossed the tongs and poker on the floor. Gilray maintains that instead of playing "fool's tricks" like these ("fool's tricks!") I should have got up and gone at once to his rooms with my water-bottle. What? and disturbed my neighbors? Besides, could I reasonably be expected to risk catching my death of cold for the sake of a wretched chrysanthemum? One reads of men doing such things for young ladies who seek lilies in dangerous ponds or edelweiss on overhanging cliffs. But Gilray was not my sweetheart, nor, I feel certain, any other person's.

I come now to the day prior to Gilray's return. I had just reached the office when I remembered about the chrysanthemum. It was my last chance. If I watered it once I should be in a position to state that, whatever condition it might be in, I had certainly been watering it. I jumped into a hansom, told the cabby to drive to the inn, and twenty minutes afterward had one hand on Gilray's door, while the other held the largest water-can in the house. Opening the door I rushed in. The can nearly fell from my hand. There was no flower-pot! I rang the bell. "Mr. Gilray's chrysanthemum!" I cried. What do you think William John said? He coolly told me that the plant was dead, and had been flung out days ago. I went to the theater that night to keep myself from thinking. All next day I contrived to remain out of Gilray's sight. When we met he was stiff and polite. He did not say a word about the chrysanthemum for a week, and then it all came out with a rush. I let him talk. With the servants flinging out the flower-pots faster than I could water them, what more could I have done? A coolness between us was inevitable. This I regretted, but my mind was made up on one point: I would never do Gilray a favor again.



J. M. BARRIE

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE
BY CHARLES LEVER

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

By CHARLES LEVER

YOU may easily suppose," began Mr. O'Leary, "that the unhappy termination of my first passion served as a shield to me for a long time against my unfortunate tendencies toward the fair, and such was really the case. I never spoke to a young lady for three years after, without a reeling in my head, so associated in my mind was love and sea-sickness. However, at last, what will not time do? It was about four years from the date of this adventure, when I became so oblivious of my former failure, as again to tempt my fortune. My present choice, in every way unlike the last, was a gay, lively girl, of great animal spirits, and a considerable turn for raillery, that spared no one; the members of her own family were not even sacred in her eyes; and her father, a reverend dean, as frequently figured among the ludicrous as his neighbors.

"The Evershams had been very old friends of a rich aunt of mine, who never, by the by, had condescended to notice me till I made their acquaintance; but no sooner had I done so, than she sent for me, and gave me to understand that in the event of my succeeding to the hand of Fanny Eversham, I should be her heir and the possessor of about sixty thousand pounds. She did not stop here; but by canvassing the dean in my favor, speedily put the matter on a most favorable footing, and in less than two months I was received as the accepted suitor of the fair Fanny, then one of the reigning belles of Dublin.

"They lived at this time, about three miles from town, in a very pretty country, where I used to pass all my mornings, and many of my evenings, too, in a state of happiness that I should have considered perfect, if it were not for two unhappy blots—one, the taste of my betrothed for laughing at her friends; another, the diabolical propensity of my intended father-in-law to talk politics; to the former I could

CHARLES LEVER

submit; but with the latter submission only made bad worse; for he invariably drew up as I receded, dryly observing that with men who had no avowed opinions, it was ill-agreeing; or that, with persons who kept their politics as a school-boy does his pocket-money, never to spend, and always ready to change, it was unpleasant to dispute. Such taunts as these I submitted to, as well I might; secretly resolving, that as I now knew the meaning of Whig and Tory, I'd contrive to spend my life, after marriage, out of the worthy dean's diocese.

"Time wore on, and at length, to my most pressing solicitations it was conceded that a day for our marriage should be appointed. Not even the unlucky termination of this my second love affair can deprive me of the happy souvenir of the few weeks which were to intervene before our destined union.

"The mornings were passed in ransacking all the shops where wedding finery could be procured—laces, blondes, velvets, and satins, littered every corner of the deanery—and there was scarcely a carriage in a coach-maker's yard in the city that I had not sat and jumped in, to try the springs, by the special direction of Mrs. Eversham, who never ceased to impress me with the awful responsibility I was about to take upon me, in marrying so great a prize as her daughter—a feeling I found very general among many of my friends at the Kildare Street club.

"Among the many indispensable purchases which I was to make, and about which Fanny expressed herself more than commonly anxious, was a saddle-horse for me. She was a great horse-woman, and hated riding with only a servant; and had given me to understand as much about half-a-dozen times each day for the last five weeks. How shall I acknowledge it—equestrianism was never my forte. I had all my life considerable respect for the horse as an animal, pretty much as I dreaded a lion or a tiger; but as to any intention of mounting upon the back of one, and taking a ride, I should as soon have dreamed of taking an airing upon a giraffe; and as to the thought of buying, feeding, and maintaining such a beast at my own proper cost, I should just as soon have determined to purchase a pillory or a ducking-stool, by way of amusing my leisure hours.

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

"However, Fanny was obstinate—whether she suspected anything or not I cannot say—but nothing seemed to turn her from her purpose; and although I pleaded a thousand things in delay, yet she grew each day more impatient, and at last I saw there was nothing for it but to submit.

"When I arrived at this last bold resolve, I could not help feeling that to possess a horse, and not be able to mount him, was only deferring the ridicule; and as I had so often expressed the difficulty I felt in suiting myself as a cause of my delay, I could not possibly come forward with anything very objectionable, or I should be only the more laughed at. There was, then, but one course to take; a fortnight still intervened before the day which was to make me happy, and I accordingly resolved to take lessons in riding during the interval, and by every endeavor in my power become, if possible, able to pass muster on the saddle before my bride.

"Poor old Lalouette understood but little of the urgency of the case, when I requested his leave to take my lessons each morning at six o'clock, for I dared not absent myself during the day without exciting suspicion; and never, I will venture to assert, did knight-errant of old strive harder for the hand of his lady-love than did I during that weary fortnight; if a hippogriff had been the animal I bestrode, instead of being, as it was, an old wall-eyed gray, I could not have felt more misgivings at my temerity, or more proud of my achievement. In the first three days the unaccustomed exercise proved so severe, that when I reached the deanery I could hardly move, and crossed the floor pretty much as a pair of compasses might be supposed to do if performing that exploit. Nothing, however, could equal the kindness of my poor dear mother-in-law in embryo, and even the dean too. Fanny indeed, said nothing; but I rather think she was disposed to giggle a little; but my rheumatism, as it was called, was daily inquired after, and I was compelled to take some infernal stuff in my port wine, at dinner, that nearly made me sick at table.

"'I am sure you walk too much,' said Fanny, with one of her knowing looks. 'Papa, don't you think he ought to ride? it would be much better for him.'

"'I do, my dear,' said the dean. 'But then you see he

CHARLES LEVER

is so hard to be pleased in a horse. Your old hunting days have spoiled you; but you must forget Melton and Grantham, and condescend to keep a hack.'

"I must have looked confoundedly foolish here, for Fanny never took her eyes off me, and continued to laugh in her own wicked way.

"It was now about the ninth or tenth day of my purgatorial performances; and certainly, if there be any merit in fleshly mortifications, these religious exercises of mine should stand my part hereafter. A review had been announced in the Phoenix park, which Fanny had expressed herself most desirous to witness; and as the dean would not permit her to go without a chaperon, I had no means of escape, and promised to escort her. No sooner had I made this rash pledge than I hastened to my confidential friend, Lalouette, and having imparted to him my entire secret, asked him in a solemn and imposing manner, 'Can I do it?' The old man shook his head dubiously, looked grave, and muttered at length, 'Mosch depend on de horse.' 'I know it—I know it—I feel it,' said I, eagerly—'then where are we to find an animal that will carry me peaceably through this awful day? I care not for his price.'

"*'Votre affaire ne sera pas trop chère,'* said he.

"'Why, how do you mean?' said I.

"He then proceeded to inform me that, by a singularly fortunate chance, there took place that day an auction of 'cast horses,' as they are termed, which had been used in the horse police force; and that from long riding and training to stand fire, nothing could be more suitable than one of these, being both easy to ride and not given to start at noise.

"I could have almost hugged the old fellow for his happy suggestion, and waited with impatience for three o'clock to come, when we repaired together to Essexbridge, at that time the place selected for these sales.

"I was at first a little shocked at the look of the animals drawn up; they were most miserably thin, most of them swelled in the legs, few without sore backs, and not one eye on an average in every three; but still they were all high-steppers, and carried a great tail. 'There's your affaire,' said the old Frenchman, as a long-legged, fiddle-headed beast

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

was led out; turning out his forelegs so as to endanger the man who walked beside him.

"'Yes, there's blood for you,' said Charley Dycer, seeing my eye fixed on the wretched beast; 'equal to fifteen stone with any fox-hounds; safe in all his paces, and warranted sound; except,' added he, in a whisper, 'a slight spavin in both hind legs, ring-bone, and a little touch in the wind.' Here the animal gave an approving cough. 'Will any gentleman say fifty pounds to begin?' But no gentleman did. A hackney-coachman, however, said five, and the sale was opened; the beast trotting up and down nearly over the bidders at every moment, and plunging on so that it was impossible to know what was doing.

"'Five ten—fifteen—six pounds—thank you, sir—guineas'—seven pounds,' said I, bidding against myself, not perceiving that I had spoken last. 'Thank you, Mr. Moriarty,' said Dycer, turning toward an invisible purchaser supposed to be in the crowd. 'Thank you, sir, you'll not let a good one go that way.' Every one here turned to find out the very knowing gentleman; but he could nowhere be seen.

"Dycer resumed, 'Seven ten, for Mr. Moriarty. Going for seven ten—a cruel sacrifice—there's action for you—playful beast.' Here the devil had stumbled and nearly killed a basket-woman with two children.

"'Eight,' said I, with a loud voice.

"'Eight pounds, quite absurd,' said Dycer, almost rudely; 'a charger like that for eight pounds—going for eight pounds—going—nothing above eight pounds—no reserve, gentlemen, you are aware of that. They are all, as it were, his Majesty's stud—no reserve whatever—last time, eight pounds—gone.'

"Amid a very hearty cheer from the mob, God knows why, but a Dublin mob always cheer—I returned accompanied by a ragged fellow, leading my new purchase after me with a hay halter.

"'What is the meaning of those letters?' said I, pointing to a very conspicuous G. R., with sundry other enigmatical signs, burned upon the animal's hind quarter.

• "'That's to show he was a po-lis,' said the fellow with a

CHARLES LEVER

grin; 'and when ye ride with ladies, ye must turn the decoy side.'

"The auspicious morning at last arrived; and, strange to say, that the first waking thought was of the unlucky day that ushered in my yachting excursion, four years before. Why this was so I cannot pretend to guess: there was but little analogy in the circumstances, at least so far as anything had then gone. 'How is Marius?' said I to my servant, as he opened my shutters. Here let me mention that a friend of the Kildare Street club had suggested this name from the remarkably classic character of my steed's countenance; his nose, he assured me, was perfectly Roman.

"'Marius is doing finely, sir, barring his cough, and the trifle that ails his hind legs.'

"'He'll carry me quietly, Simon; eh?'

"'Quietly! I'll warrant he'll carry you quietly, if that's all.'

"Here was comfort, certainly. Simon had lived forty years as pantry boy with my mother, and knew a great deal about horses. I dressed myself, therefore, in high spirits; and if my pilot jacket and oil-skin cap in former days had half persuaded me that I was born for marine achievements, certainly my cords and tops, that morning, went far to convince me that I must have once been a very keen sportsman somewhere, without knowing it. It was a delightful July day that I set out to join my friends, who, having recruited a large party, were to rendezvous at the corner of Stephen's Green; thither I proceeded in a certain rambling trot, which I have often observed is a very favorite pace with timid horsemen and gentlemen of the medical profession. I was hailed with a most hearty welcome by a large party as I turned out of Grafton Street, among whom I perceived several friends of Miss Eversham, and some young dragoon officers, not of my acquaintance, but who appeared to know Fanny intimately, and were laughing heartily with her as I rode up.

"I don't know if other men have experienced what I am about to mention or not; but certainly to me there is no more painful sensation than to find yourself among a number of well-mounted, well-equipped people, while the animal

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

you yourself bestride seems only fit for the kennel. Every look that is cast at your unlucky steed—every whispered observation about you are so many thorns in your flesh, till at last you begin to feel that your appearance is for very little else than the amusement and mirth of the assembly; and every time you rise in your stirrups you excite a laugh.

"Where, for mercy's sake, did you find that creature?" said Fanny, surveying Marius through her glass.

"Oh, him, eh? Why, he is a handsome horse, if in condition—a charger, you know—that's his style."

"Indeed," lisped a young lancer, 'I should be devilish sorry to charge, or be charged with him.' And here they all chuckled at this puppy's silly joke, and I drew up to repress further liberties.

"Is he anything of a fencer?" said a young country gentleman.

"To judge from his near eye, I should say much more of a boxer," said another.

"Here commenced a running fire of pleasantry at the expense of my poor steed; which, not content with attacking his physical, extended to his moral qualities. An old gentleman near me observing, 'that I ought not to have mounted him at all, seeing he was so deuced groggy;' to which I replied, by insinuating, that if others present were as free from the influence of ardent spirits, society would not be a sufferer; an observation that, I flatter myself, turned the mirth against the old fellow, for they all laughed for a quarter of an hour after.

"Well, at last we set out in a brisk trot, and, placed near Fanny, I speedily forgot all my annoyances in the prospect of figuring to advantage before her. When we reached the College Green the leaders of the cortège suddenly drew up, and we soon found that the entire street opposite the Bank was filled with a dense mob of people, who appeared to be swayed hither and thither, like some mighty beast, as the individuals composing it were engaged in close conflict. It was nothing more nor less than one of those almost weekly rows which then took place between the students of the University and the town's-people, and which rarely ended without serious consequences. The numbers of people press-

CHARLES LEVER

ing on to the scene of action soon blocked up our retreat, and we found ourselves most unwilling spectators of the conflict. Political watch-words were loudly shouted by each party; and at last the students, who appeared to be yielding to superior numbers, called out for the intervention of the police. The aid was nearer than they expected; for at the same instant a body of mounted policemen, whose high helmets rendered them sufficiently conspicuous, were seen trotting at sharp pace down Dame Street. On they came with drawn sabres, led by a well-looking, gentleman-like personage in plain clothes, who dashed at once into the middle of the fray, issuing his orders, and pointing out to his followers to secure the ringleaders. Up to this moment I had been a most patient and rather amused spectator of what was doing. Now, however, my part was to commence, for at the word 'Charge,' given in a harsh, deep voice by the sergeant of the party, Marius, remembering his ancient instinct, pricked up his ears, cocked his tail, flung up both his hind legs till they nearly broke the Provost's windows, and plunged into the thickest of the fray like a devil incarnate.

"Self-preservation must be a strong instinct, for I well remember how little pain it cost me to see the people tumbling and rolling beneath me, while I continued to keep my seat. It was only a moment before, and that immense mass were a man-to-man encounter, now all the indignation of both parties seemed turned upon me; brick-bats were loudly implored and paving-stones begged to throw at my devoted head; the Wild Huntsman of the German romance never created half the terror nor one-tenth of the mischief that I did in less than fifteen minutes, for the ill-starred beast continued twining and twisting like a serpent, plunging and kicking the entire time, and occasionally biting too; all which accomplishments, I afterwards learned, however little in request in civil life, are highly prized in the horse police.

Every new order of the sergeant was followed in his own fashion by Marius, who very soon contrived to concentrate in my unhappy person all the interest of about fifteen hundred people.

"'Secure that scoundrel,' said the magistrate, pointing with his finger towards me, as I rode over a respectable-

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

looking old lady, with a gray muff. 'Secure him. Cut him down.'

"'Ah, devil's luck to him, if ye do,' said a newsmonger with a broken shin.

"On I went, however; and now, as the Fates would have it, instead of bearing me out of further danger, the confounded brute dashed onward to where the magistrate was standing, surrounded by policemen. I thought I saw him change color as I came on. I suppose my own looks were none of the pleasantest, for the worthy man evidently liked them not. Into the midst of them we plunged, upsetting a corporal, horse and all, and appearing as if bent upon reaching the alderman.

"'Cut him down, for Heaven's sake. Will nobody shoot him?' said he, with a voice trembling with fear and anger.

"At these words a wretch lifted up his sabre, and made a cut at my head. I stooped suddenly, and throwing myself from the saddle, seized the poor alderman round the neck, and both came rolling to the ground together. So completely was he possessed with the notion that I meant to assassinate him, that while I was endeavoring to extricate myself from his grasp, he continued to beg his life in the most heart-rending manner.

"My story is now soon told. So effectually did they rescue the alderman from his danger that they left me insensible, and I only came to myself some days after by finding myself in the dock in Green Street, charged with an indictment of nineteen counts; the only word of truth is what lay in the preamble, for the 'devil inciting' me only would ever have made me the owner of that infernal beast, the cause of all my misfortunes. I was so stupefied from my beating that I know little of the course of the proceedings. My friends told me afterward that I had a narrow escape from transportation; but for the greatest influence exerted in my behalf, I should certainly have passed the autumn in the agreeable recreation of pounding oyster-shells or carding wool; and it certainly must have gone hard with me, for, stupefied as I was, I remember the sensation in court when the alderman made his appearance with a patch over his eye. The affecting admonition of the little judge—who,

MR. O'LEARY'S SECOND LOVE

when passing sentence upon me, adverted to the former respectability of my life and the rank of my relatives—actually made the galleries weep.

“Four months in Newgate and a fine to the king, then, rewarded my taste for horse exercise; and it's no wonder if I prefer going on foot.

“As to Miss Eversham, the following short note from the dean concluded my hopes in that quarter:

“Deanery, Wednesday morning.

“Sir,—After the very distressing publicity to which your late conduct has exposed you—the so open avowal of political opinions, at variance with those (I will say) of every gentleman—and the recorded sentence of a judge on the verdict of twelve of your countrymen—I should hope that you will not feel my present admonition necessary to inform you that your visits to my house shall cease.

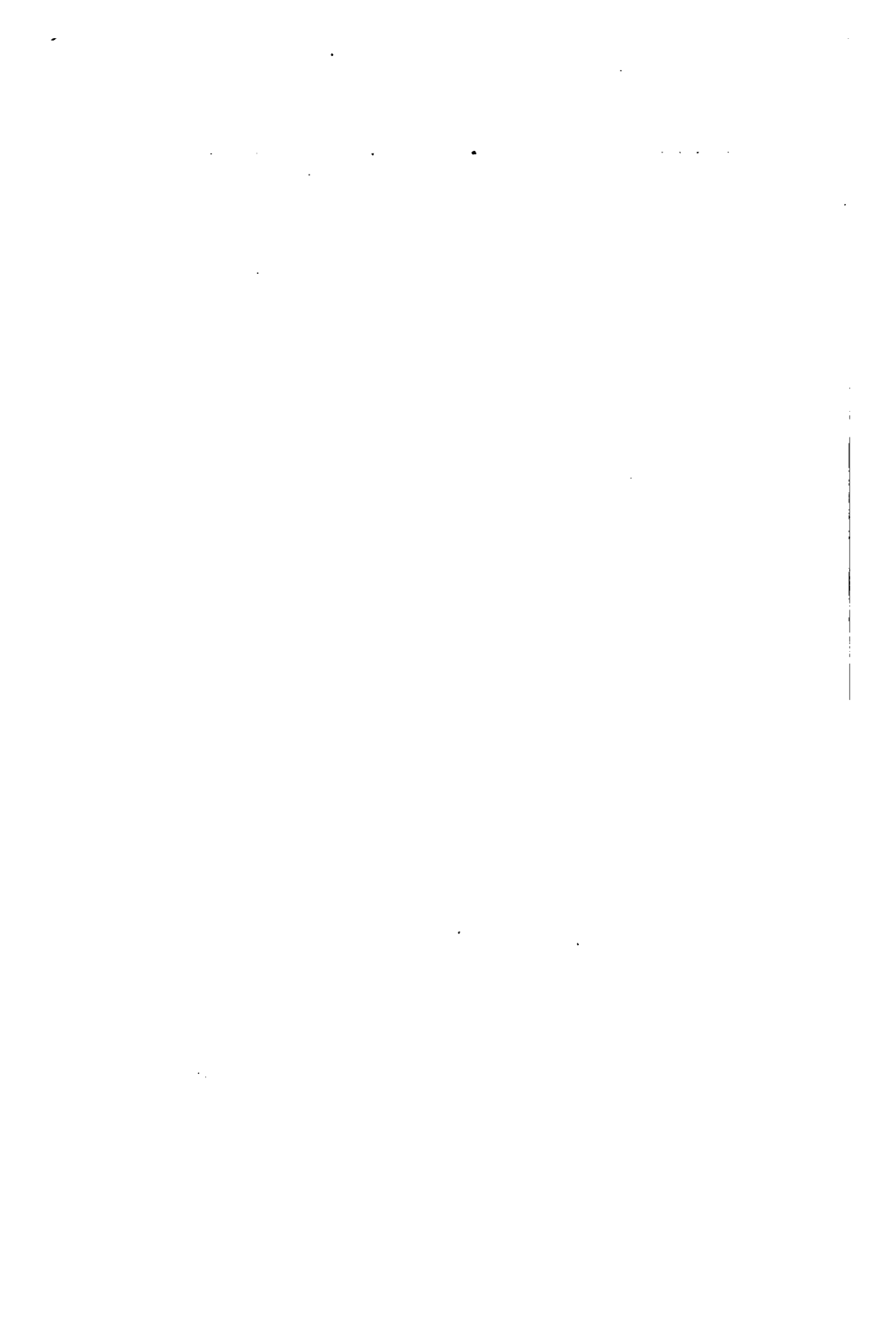
“The presents you made my daughter, when under our unfortunate ignorance of your real character, have been addressed to your hotel, and I am your most obedient, humble servant,

“‘Oliver Eversham.’

“Here ended my second affair ‘par amour;’ and I freely confess to you that if I can only obtain a wife in a sea voyage, or a steeple-chase, I am likely to fulfil one great condition in modern advertising—‘as having no incumbrance, nor any objection to travel.’”

**THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER
OF HOFBAU**

BY ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS





THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

By ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

THERE is a swift little river running by the village of Hofbau, and on the river is a mill, kept in the days of King Rudolf III. by a sturdy fellow who lived there all alone; the King knew him, having alighted at his house for a draught of beer as he rode hunting, and it was of him the King spoke when he said to the Queen: "There is, I believe, but one man in the country whom Osra could not move, and he is the Miller of Hofbau." But although he addressed the Queen, it was his sister at whom he aimed his speech. The Princess herself was sitting by, and when she heard the King she said:

"In truth I do not desire to move any man. What but trouble comes of it? Yet who is this miller?"

The King told her where the miller might be found, and he added: "If you convert him to the love of women you shall have the finest bracelet in Strelsau."

"There is nothing, sire, so remote from my thoughts or desires as to convert your miller," said Osra scornfully.

In this, at the moment, she spoke truthfully; but being left alone for some days at the Castle of Zenda, which is but a few miles from Hofbau, she found the time hang very heavy on her hands; indeed she did not know what to do with herself for weariness; and for this reason, and none other at all, one day she ordered her horse and rode off with a single groom into the forest. Coming, as the morning went on, to a wide road, she asked the groom where it led. "To Hofbau, madame," he answered. "It is not more than a mile further on." Osra waited a few moments, then she said: "I will ride on and see the village, for I have been told that it is pretty. Wait here till I return," and she rode

Copyright 1895, 1896, A. H. Hawkins; 1896 Frederick A. Stokes Company; 1895, 1896, S. S. McClure, Limited.

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

on, smiling a little, and with a delicate tint of colour in her cheeks.

Before long she saw the river and the mill on the river; and, coming to the mill, she saw the miller sitting before his door, smoking a long pipe. She called out to him, asking him to sell her a glass of milk.

"You can have it for the asking," said the miller. He was a good-looking fair fellow, and wore a scarlet cap. "There is a pail of it just inside the door behind me." Yet he did not rise, but lay there, lolling luxuriously in the sun. For he did not know Osra, never having been to Strelsau in his life, and to Zenda three or four times only, and that when the Princess was not there. Moreover—though this, as must be allowed, is not to the purpose—he had sworn never again to go so far afield.

Being answered in this manner, and at the same time desiring the milk, the Princess had no choice but to dismount.

This she did, and passed by the miller, pausing a moment to look at him with bright curious eyes, that flashed from under the brim of her wide-rimmed feathered hat; but the miller blinked lazily up at the sun and took no heed of her.

Osra passed on, found the pail, poured out a cup of milk, and drank it. Then, refilling the cup, she carried it to the miller.

"Will you not have some?" said she with a smile.

"I was too lazy to get it," said the miller; and he held out his hand, but did not otherwise change his position.

Osra's brow puckered and her cheek flushed as she bent down, holding the cup of milk so that the miller could reach it. He took and drained it, gave it back to her, and put his pipe in his mouth again. Osra sat down by him and watched him. He puffed and blinked away, never so much as looking at her.

"What have you for dinner?" asked she presently.

"A piece of cold pie," said he. "There's enough for two, if you're hungry."

"Would you not like it better hot?"

"Oh, ay; but I cannot weary myself with heating it."

"I'll heat it," said the Princess; and, rising, she went into the house, and made up the fire, which was almost burnt out;

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

then she heated the pie, and set the room in order, and laid the table, and drew a large jug of beer from the cask. Next she placed an arm-chair ready for the miller, and put the jug by it; then she filled the pipe from the bowl of tobacco and set a cushion in the chair. All this while she hummed a tune, and from time to time smiled gayly. Lastly, she arranged a chair by the elbow of the miller's chair; then she went out and told him that his dinner was ready; and he stumbled to his feet with a sigh of laziness, and walked before her into the house.

"May I come?" cried she.

"Aye, there is enough for two," said the Miller of Hofbau without looking round.

So she followed him in. He sank into the arm-chair and sat there, for a moment surveying the room which was so neat, and the table so daintily laid, and the pie so steaming hot. And he sighed, saying:

"It was like this before poor mother died." And he fell to on a great portion of pie with which Osra piled his plate.

When he had finished eating—which thing did not happen for some time—she held the jug while he took a long draught; then she brought a coal in the tongs and held it while he lit his pipe from it; then she sat down by him. For several moments he puffed, and then at last he turned his head and looked at Princess Osra; she drooped her long lashes and cast down her eyes; next she lifted her eyes and glanced for an instant at the miller; and, finally, she dropped her eyes again and murmured shyly: "What is it, sir? Why do you look at me?"

"You seem to be a handy wench," observed the miller. "The pie was steaming hot and yet not burnt, the beer was well frothed but not shaken nor thickened, and the pipe draws well. Where does your father dwell?"

"He is dead, sir," said Princess Osra very demurely.

"And your mother?" pursued the miller.

"She also is dead."

"There is small harm in that," said the miller thoughtfully; and Osra turned away her head to hide her smile.

"Are you not very lonely, living here all by yourself?" she asked a moment later.

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

"Indeed I have to do everything for myself," said the miller sadly.

"And there is nobody to—to care for you?"

"No, nor to look after my comfort," said the miller. "Have you any kindred?"

"I have two brothers, sir; but they are married now, and have no need of me."

The miller laid down his pipe and, setting his elbow on the table, faced Princess Osra.

"H'm!" said he. "And is it likely you will ride this way again?"

"I may chance to do so," said Osra, and now there was a glance of malicious triumph in her eyes; she was thinking already how the bracelet would look on her arm.

"Ah!" said the miller. And after a pause he added: "If you do, come half an hour before dinner, and you can lend a hand in making it ready. Where did you get those fine clothes?"

"My mistress gave them to me," answered Osra. She has cast them off."

"And that horse you rode?"

"It is my master's; I have it to ride when I do my mistress's errands."

"Will your master and mistress do anything for you if you leave your service?"

"I have been promised a present if——" said Osra, and she paused in apparent confusion.

"Aye," said the miller, nodding sagaciously, as he rose slowly from the arm-chair. "Will you be this way again in a week or so?" he asked.

"I think it is very likely," answered the Princess Osra.

"Then look in," said the miller. "About half an hour before dinner."

He nodded his head again very significantly at Osra, and, turning away, went to his work, as a man goes who would far rather sit still in the sun. But just as he reached the door he turned his head and asked: "Are you sturdy?"

"I am strong enough, I think," said she.

"A sack of flour is a heavy thing for man to lift by him-

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

self," remarked the miller, and with that he passed through the door and left her alone.

Then she cleared the table, put the pie—or what was left—in the larder, set the room in order, refilled the pipe, stood the jug handy by the cask, and, with a look of great satisfaction on her face, tripped out to where her horse was, mounted and rode away.

The next week—and the interval had seemed long to her, and no less long to the Miller of Hofbau—she came again, and so the week after; and in the week following that she came twice; and on the second of these two days, after dinner, the miller did not go off to his sacks, but he followed her out of the house, pipe in hand, when she went to mount her horse, and as she was about to mount, he said:

"Indeed you're a handy wench."

"You say much of my hands, but nothing of my face," remarked Princess Osra.

"Of your face?" repeated the miller in some surprise. "What should I say of your face?"

"Well, is it not a comely face?" said Osra, turning towards him that he might be better able to answer her question.

The miller regarded her for some minutes, then a slow smile spread on his lips.

"Oh, aye, it is well enough," said he. Then he laid a floury finger on her arm as he continued: 'If you come next week—why, it is but half a mile to church! I'll have the cart ready and bid the priest be there. What's your name?' For he had not hitherto asked Osra's name.

"Rosa Schwartz," said she, and her face was all alight with triumph and amusement.

"Yes, I shall be very comfortable with you," said the miller. "We will be at the church an hour before noon, so that there may be time afterwards for the preparation of dinner."

"That will be on Thursday in next week?" asked Osra.

"Aye, on Thursday," said the miller, and he turned on his heel. But in a minute he turned again, saying: "Give me a kiss, then, since we are to be man and wife," and he came slowly towards her, holding his arms open.

"Nay, the kiss will wait till Thursday. Maybe there will be less flour on your face then." And with a laugh she dived

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

under his outstretched arms and made her escape. The day being warm, the miller did not put himself out by pursuing her, but stood where he was, with a broad comfortable smile on his lips; and so he watched her ride away.

Now, as she rode, the Princess was much occupied in thinking of the Miller of Hofbau. Elated and triumphant as she was at having won from him a promise of marriage, she was yet somewhat vexed that he had not shown a more passionate affection, and this thought clouded her brow for full half an hour. But then her face cleared. "Still waters run deep," she said to herself. "He is not like these Court gallants, who have learnt to make love as soon as they learn to walk, and cannot talk to a woman without bowing and grimacing and sighing at every word. The miller has a deep nature, and surely I have won his heart, or he would not take me for his wife. Poor miller! I pray that he may not grieve very bitterly when I make the truth known to him!"

And then, at the thought of the grief of the miller, her face was again clouded; but it again cleared when she considered of the great triumph that she had won, and how she would enjoy a victory over the King, and would have the finest bracelet in all Strelsau as a gift from him. Thus she arrived at the Castle in the height of merriment and exultation.

It chanced that the King came to Zenda that night, to spend a week hunting the boar in the forest; and when Osra, all blushing and laughing, told him of her success with the Miller of Hofbau he was greatly amused, and swore that no such girl ever lived, and applauded her, renewing his promise of the bracelet; and he declared that he would himself ride with her to Hofbau on the wedding-day, and see how the poor miller bore his disappointment.

"Indeed I do not see how you are going to excuse yourself to him," he laughed.

"A purse of five hundred crowns must do that office for me," said she.

"What, will crowns patch a broken heart?"

"His broken heart must heal itself, as men's broken hearts do, brother!"

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

"In truth, sister, I have known them cure themselves. Let us hope it may be so with the Miller of Hofbau."

"At the worst I have revenged the wrongs of women on him. It is unendurable that any man should scorn us, be he king or miller."

"It is indeed very proper that he should suffer great pangs," said the King, "in spite of his plaster of crowns. I shall love to see the stolid fellow sighing and moaning like a lovesick courtier."

So they agreed to ride together to the miller's at Hofbau on the day appointed for the wedding, and both of them waited with impatience for it. But, with the bad luck that pursues mortals (even though they be princes) in this poor world, it happened that early in the morning of the Thursday a great officer came riding post-haste from Strelsau to take the King's commands on high matters of state; and, although Rudolf was sorely put out of temper by this untoward interruption, yet he had no alternative but to transact the business before he rode to the miller's at Hofbau. So he sat fretting and fuming, while long papers were read to him, and the Princess walked up and down the length of the drawbridge, fretting also; for before the King could escape from his affairs, the hour of the wedding was already come, and doubtless the Miller of Hofbau was waiting with the priest in the church. Indeed it was one o'clock or more before Osra and the King set out from Zenda, and they had then a ride of an hour and a half; and all this when Osra should have been at the miller's at eleven o'clock.

"Poor man, he will be half mad with waiting and with anxiety for me!" cried Osra. "I must give him another hundred crowns on account of it." And she added, after a pause, "I pray he may not take it too much to heart, Rudolf."

"We must try to prevent him doing himself any mischief in his despair," smiled the King.

"Indeed it is a serious matter," pouted the Princess, who thought the King's smile out of place.

"It was not so when you began it," said her brother; and Osra was silent.

Then about half-past two they came in sight of the mill. Now the King dismounted, while they were still several

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

hundred yards away, and tied his horse to a tree in a clump by the wayside; and when they came near to the mill he made a circuit and approached from the side, and, creeping along to the house, hid himself behind a large water-butt, which stood just under the window; from that point he could hear what passed inside the house, and could see if he stood erect. But Osra rode up to the front of the mill, as she had been accustomed, and, getting down from her horse, walked up to the door. The miller's cart stood in the yard of the mill, but the horse was not in the shafts, and neither the miller nor anybody else was to be seen about; and the door of the house was shut.

"He must be waiting at the church," said she. "But I will look in and make sure. Indeed I feel half afraid to meet him." And her heart was beating rapidly and her face was rather pale as she walked up to the door; for she feared what the miller might do in the passion of his disappointment at learning who she was and that she could not be his wife. "I hope the six hundred crowns will comfort him," she said, as she laid her hand on the latch of the door; and she sighed, her heart being heavy for the miller, and, maybe a little heavy also for the guilt that lay on her conscience for having deceived him.

Now when she lifted the latch and opened the door, the sight that met her eyes was this: The table was strewn with the remains of a brave dinner; two burnt-out pipes lay beside the plates. A smaller table was in front of the fire; on it stood a very large jug, entirely empty, but bearing signs of having been full not so long ago; and on either side of it, each in an arm-chair, sat the priest of the village and the Miller of Hofbau; both of them were sleeping very contentedly, and snoring somewhat as they slept. The Princess, smitten by remorse at the spectacle, said softly:

"Poor fellow, he grew weary of waiting, and hungry, and was compelled to take his dinner; and, like the kind man he is, he has entertained the priest, and kept him here, so that no time should be lost when I arrived. Indeed I am afraid the poor man loves me very much. Well, miller, or lord, or prince—they are all the same. Heigh-ho! Why did I deceive him?" And she walked up to the miller's chair, leant

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

over the back of it, and lightly touched his red cap with her fingers. He put up his hand and brushed with it, as though he brushed away a fly, but gave no other sign of awakening.

The King called softly from behind the water-butt under the window:

"Is he there, Osra? Is he there?"

"The poor man has fallen asleep in weariness," she answered. "But the priest is here, ready to marry us. Oh, Rudolf, I am so sorry for what I have done!"

"Girls are always mighty sorry, after it is done," remarked the King. "Wake him up, Osra."

At this moment the Miller of Hofbau sat up in his chair and gave a great sneeze; and by this sound the priest also was awakened. Osra came forward and stood between them. The miller looked at her, and tilted his red cap forward in order that he might scratch his head. Then he looked across to the priest, and said:

"It is she, Father. She has come."

The priest rubbed his hands together, and smiled uncomfortably.

"We waited two hours," said he, glancing at the clock. "See, it is three o'clock now."

"I am sorry you waited so long," said Osra, "but I could not come before. And—and now that I am come, I cannot——"

But here she paused in great distress and confusion, not knowing how to break her sad tidings to the Miller of Hofbau.

The miller drew his legs up under his chair, and regarded Osra with a grave air.

"You should have been here at eleven," said he. "I went to the church at eleven, and the priest was there, and my cousin Hans to act as my groom, and my cousin Gertrude to be your maid. There we waited hard on two hours. But you did not come."

"I am very sorry," pleaded Princess Osra. The King laughed low to himself behind the water-butt, being much amused at her distress and her humility.

"And now that you are come," pursued the miller, scratch-

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

ing his head again, "I do not know what we are to do." He looked again at the priest, seeking counsel.

At this the Princess Osra, thinking that an opportunity had come, took the purse of six hundred crowns from under her cloak, and laid it on the table.

"What is this?" said the miller, for the first time showing some eagerness.

"They are for you," said Osra as she watched him while he unfastened the purse. Then he poured the crowns out on the table, and counted them one by one, till he had told all the six hundred. Then he raised his hands above his head, let them fall again, sighed slightly, and looked across at the priest.

"I warned you not to be in such a hurry, friend miller," remarked the priest.

"I waited two hours," said the miller plaintively, "and you know that she is a handy wench, and very fond of me."

He began to gather up the crowns and return them to the purse.

"I trust I am a handy wench," said Osra, smiling, yet still very nervous, "and, indeed, I have a great regard for the miller, but——"

"Nay, he does not mean you," interrupted the priest.

"Six hundred," sighed the miller, "and Gertrude has but two hundred! Still she is a handy wench and very sturdy. I doubt if you could lift a sack by yourself, as she can." And he looked doubtfully at Osra's slender figure.

"I do not know why you talk of Gertrude," said the Princess petulantly. "What is Gertrude to me?"

"Why, I take it that she is nothing at all to you," answered the priest, folding his hands on his lap and smiling placidly. "Still, for my part, I bade him wait a little longer."

"I waited two hours," said the miller. "And Gertrude urged me, saying that you would not come, and that she would look after me better than you, being one of the family. And she said it was hard that she should have no husband, while her own cousin married a stranger. And since it was all the same to me, provided I got a handy and sturdy wench——"

"What?" cried the Princess Osra; and the King was so

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

interested that he rose up from behind the water-butt, and, leaning his elbows on the window-sill, looked in and saw all that happened.

"It being," pursued the Miller of Hofbau, "all the same to me, so that I got what I wanted, why, when you did not come——"

"He married his cousin," said the priest.

A sudden roar of laughter came from the window. All three turned round, but the King ducked his head and crouched again behind the water-butt before they saw him.

"Who was that?" cried the priest.

"A lad that came to hold my horse," answered Osra hastily, and then she turned fiercely on the miller.

"And that," she said, "was all you wanted! I thought you loved me."

"Aye, I liked you very well," said the miller. "You are a handy——" A stamp of her foot drowned the rest. "But you should have come in time," he went on.

"And this Gertrude—is she pretty?" demanded Osra.

"Gertrude is well enough," said the miller. "But she has only two hundred crowns." And he put the purse, now full again, on the table with a resigned sigh.

"And you shall have no more," cried Osra, snatching up her purse in great rage. "And you and Gertrude may——"

"What of Gertrude?" came at this moment from the door of the room where the sacks were. The Princess turned round swift as the wind, and she saw in the doorway a short and very broad girl, with a very wide face and straggling hair; the girl's nose was very flat, and her eyes were small; but her great mouth smiled good-humouredly and, as the Princess looked, she let slip to the ground a sack of flour that she had been carrying on her sturdy back.

"Aye, Gertrude is well enough," said the miller, looking at her contentedly. "She is very strong and willing."

Then, while Gertrude stood wondering and staring with wide eyes in the doorway, the Princess swept up to the miller, and leant over him, and cried:

"Look at my face, look at my face! What manner of face is it?"

"It is well enough," said the miller. "But Gertrude is——"

ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS

There was a crash on the floor, and the six hundred crowns rolled out of the purse, and scattered, spinning and rolling hither and thither, all over the floor and into every corner of the room. And Princess Osra cried: "Have you no eyes?" and then she turned away; for her lip was quivering, and she would not have the miller see it. But she turned from the miller only to face Gertrude his wife; Gertrude's small eyes brightened with sudden intelligence.

"Ah, you're the other girl!" said Gertrude with much amusement. "And was that your dowry? It is large! I am glad you did not come in time. But see, I'll pick it up for you. Nay, don't take on. I dare say you'll find another husband."

She passed by Osra, patting her on the shoulder kindly as she went, and then fell on her knees and began to pick up the crowns, crawling after them all over the floor, and holding up her apron to receive the recovered treasure. And Princess Osra stood looking at her.

"Aye, you'll find another husband," nodded the priest encouragingly.

"Aye, you'll find another husband," assented the miller placidly. "And just as one girl is pretty nearly as good as another—if she is handy and sturdy—so one husband is as good as another, if he can keep a house over you."

Princess Osra said nothing. But Gertrude, having picked up the crowns, came to her with a full apron, saying:

"Hold your lap, and I'll pour them in. They'll get you a good husband."

Princess Osra suddenly bent and kissed Gertrude's cheek, and she said gently:

"I hope you have got a good husband, my dear; but let him do some work for himself. And keep the six hundred crowns as a present from me, for he will value you more with eight hundred than with two."

The eyes of all three were fixed on her in wonder and almost in fear, for her tone and manner were now different. Then she turned to the miller, and she bit her lip and dashed her hand across her eyes, and she said:

"And you, miller, are the only sensible man I have found in all the kingdom. Therefore good luck and a good wife to

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

you." And she gave a little short laugh, and turned and walked out of the cottage, leaving them all spellbound in wonder. But the miller rose from his chair and ran to the door, and when he reached it the King was just lifting Osra on to her horse; the miller knew the King, and stood there with eyes wide and cheeks bulged in wonder; but he could gasp out no more than "The King, the King!" before Rudolf and Osra were far away. And they could, none of them, neither the miller, nor Gertrude, nor the priest, tell what the matter meant, until one day King Rudolf rode again to the mill at Hofbau, and, having sent for the priest, told the three enough of the truth, saying that the affair was the outcome of a jest at Court; and he made each of them a handsome present, and vowed them to secrecy by their fealty and attachment to his person and his honour.

"So she would not have married me, anyhow?" asked the miller.

"I think not, friend," answered Rudolf with a laugh.

"Then we are but quits and all is well. Gertrude, the jug, my lass!"

And so, indeed, it seemed to the King that they were but quits, and so he said to the Princess Osra. But he declared that she had so far prevailed with the miller as to make him desire marriage as an excellent and useful thing in itself, although she had not persuaded him that it was of great moment whom a man married. Therefore he was very anxious to give her the bracelet which he had promised, and more than once prayed her to accept it. But Osra saw the laugh that lurked in the King's eye, and would not consent to have the bracelet, and for a long while she did not love to speak of the Miller of Hofbau. Yet once, when the King on some occasion cried out very impatiently that all men were fools, she said:

"Sire, you forget the Miller of Hofbau." And she blushed, and laughed, and turned her eyes away.

One other thing she did which very greatly puzzled Queen Margaret, and all the ladies of the Court, and all the waiting-women, and all the serving-maids, and, in fine, every person high or low who saw or heard of it, except the King only. For in winter evenings she took her scissors and her needle,

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE MILLER OF HOFBAU

and she cut strips of ribbon, each a foot long and a couple of inches broad; on each of them she embroidered a motto or legend; and she affixed the ribbons bearing the legend to each and every one of the mirrors in each of her chambers at Strelsau, at Zenda, and at the other royal residences. And her waiting-women noticed that, whenever she had looked in the mirror and smiled at her own image or shewn other signs of pleasure in it, she would then cast her eyes up to the legend, and seem to read it, and blush a little, and laugh a little, and sigh a little; the reason for which things they could by no means understand.

For the legend was but this:

“Remember the Miller of Hofbau.”

THE STOLEN BODY

BY H. G. WELLS

THE STOLEN BODY

By H. G. WELLS

TR. BESSEL was the senior partner in the firm of Bessel, Hart, and Brown, of St. Paul's Churchyard, and for many years he was well known among those interested in psychical research as a liberal-minded and conscientious investigator. He was an unmarried man, and instead of living in the suburbs, after the fashion of his class, he occupied rooms in the Albany, near Piccadilly. He was particularly interested in the questions of thought transference and of apparitions of the living, and in November, 1896, he commenced a series of experiments in conjunction with Mr. Vincey, of Staple Inn, in order to test the alleged possibility of projecting an apparition of one's self by force of will through space.

Their experiments were conducted in the following manner: At a prearranged hour Mr. Bessel shut himself in one of his rooms in the Albany and Mr. Vincey in his sitting-room in Staple Inn, and each then fixed his mind as resolutely as possible on the other. Mr. Bessel had acquired the art of self-hypnotism, and, so far as he could, he attempted first to hypnotise himself and then to project himself as a "phantom of the living" across the intervening space of nearly two miles into Mr. Vincey's apartment. On several evenings this was tried without any satisfactory result, but on the fifth or sixth occasion Mr. Vincey did actually see or imagine he saw an apparition of Mr. Bessel standing in his room. He states that the appearance, although brief, was very vivid and real. He noticed that Mr. Bessel's face was white and his expression anxious, and, moreover, that his hair was disordered. For a moment Mr. Vincey, in spite of his state of expectation, was too surprised to speak or move, and in that moment it seemed to him as though the figure glanced over its shoulder and incontinently vanished.

Copyright 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, and 1903 by H. G. Wells.

Copyright 1905 by Charles Scribner's Sons.

H. G. WELLS

It had been arranged that an attempt should be made to photograph any phantasm seen, but Mr. Vincey had not the instant presence of mind to snap the camera that lay ready on the table beside him, and when he did so he was too late. Greatly elated, however, even by this partial success, he made a note of the exact time, and at once took a cab to the Albany to inform Mr. Bessel of this result.

He was surprised to find Mr. Bessel's outer door standing open to the night, and the inner apartments lit and in an extraordinary disorder. An empty champagne magnum lay smashed upon the floor; its neck had been broken off against the inkpot on the bureau and lay beside it. An octagonal occasional table, which carried a bronze statuette and a number of choice books, had been rudely overturned, and down the primrose paper of the wall inky fingers had been drawn, as it seemed, for the mere pleasure of defilement. One of the delicate chintz curtains had been violently torn from its rings and thrust upon the fire, so that the smell of its smouldering filled the room. Indeed the whole place was disarranged in the strangest fashion. For a few minutes Mr. Vincey, who had entered sure of finding Mr. Bessel in his easy chair awaiting him, could scarcely believe his eyes, and stood staring helplessly at these unanticipated things.

Then, full of a vague sense of calamity, he sought the porter at the entrance lodge. "Where is Mr. Bessel?" he asked. "Do you know that all the furniture is broken in Mr. Bessel's room?" The porter said nothing, but, obeying his gestures, came at once to Mr. Bessel's apartment to see the state of affairs. "This settles it," he said, surveying the lunatic confusion. "I didn't know of this. Mr. Bessel's gone off. He's mad!"

He then proceeded to tell Mr. Vincey that about half an hour previously, that is to say, at about the time of Mr. Bessel's apparition in Mr. Vincey's rooms, the missing gentleman had rushed out of the gates of the Albany into Vigo Street, hatless and with disordered hair, and had vanished into the direction of Bond Street. "And as he went past me," said the porter, "he laughed—a sort of gasping laugh, with his mouth open and his eyes glaring—I tell you, sir, he fair scared me!—like this."

THE STOLEN BODY

According to his imitation it was anything but a pleasant laugh. "He waved his hand, with all his fingers crooked and clawing—like that. And he said, in a sort of fierce whisper, 'Life!' Just that one word, 'Life!'"

"Dear me," said Mr. Vincey. "Tut, tut," and "Dear me!" He could think of nothing else to say. He was naturally very much surprised. He turned from the room to the porter and from the porter to the room in the gravest perplexity. Beyond his suggestion that probably Mr. Bessel would come back presently and explain what had happened, their conversation was unable to proceed. "It might be a sudden toothache," said the porter, "a very sudden and violent toothache, jumping on him suddenly-like and driving him wild. I've broken things myself before now in such a case . . ." He thought. "If it was, why should he say 'life' to me as he went past?"

Mr. Vincey did not know. Mr. Bessel did not return, and at last Mr. Vincey, having done some more helpless staring, and having addressed a note of brief inquiry and left it in a conspicuous position on the bureau, returned in a very perplexed frame of mind to his own premises in Staple Inn. This affair had given him a shock. He was at a loss to account for Mr. Bessel's conduct on any sane hypothesis. He tried to read, but he could not do so; he went for a short walk, and was so preoccupied that he narrowly escaped a cab at the top of Chancery Lane; and at last—a full hour before his usual time—he went to bed. For a considerable time he could not sleep because of his memory of the silent confusion of Mr. Bessel's apartment, and when at length he did attain an uneasy slumber it was at once disturbed by a very vivid and distressing dream of Mr. Bessel.

He saw Mr. Bessel gesticulating wildly, and with his face white and contorted. And, inexplicably mingled with his appearance, suggested perhaps by his gestures, was an intense fear, an urgency to act. He even believes that he heard the voice of his fellow experimenter calling distressfully to him, though at the time he considered this to be an illusion. The vivid impression remained though Mr. Vincey awoke. For a space he lay awake and trembling in the darkness, possessed with that vague, unaccountable terror of unknown possi-

H. G. WELLS

bilities that comes out of dreams upon even the bravest men. But at last he roused himself, and turned over and went to sleep again, only for the dream to return with enhanced vividness.

He awoke with such a strong conviction that Mr. Bessel was in overwhelming distress and need of help that sleep was no longer possible. He was persuaded that his friend had rushed out to some dire calamity. For a time he lay reasoning vainly against this belief, but at last he gave way to it. He arose, against all reason, lit his gas, and dressed, and set out through the deserted streets—deserted, save for a noiseless policeman or so and the early news carts—towards Vigo Street to inquire if Mr. Bessel had returned.

But he never got there. As he was going down Long Acre some unaccountable impulse turned him aside out of that street towards Covent Garden, which was just waking to its nocturnal activities. He saw the market in front of him—a queer effect of glowing yellow lights and busy black figures. He became aware of a shouting, and perceived a figure turn the corner by the hotel and run swiftly towards him. He knew at once that it was Mr. Bessel. But it was Mr. Bessel transfigured. He was hatless and dishevelled, his collar was torn open, he grasped a bone-handled walking-cane near the ferrule end, and his mouth was pulled awry. And he ran, with agile strides, very rapidly. Their encounter was the affair of an instant. "Bessel!" cried Vincey.

The running man gave no sign of recognition either of Mr. Vincey or of his own name. Instead, he cut at his friend savagely with the stick, hitting him in the face within an inch of the eye. Mr. Vincey, stunned and astonished, staggered back, lost his footing, and fell heavily on the pavement. It seemed to him that Mr. Bessel leapt over him as he fell. When he looked again Mr. Bessel had vanished, and a policeman and a number of garden porters and salesmen were rushing past towards Long Acre in hot pursuit.

With the assistance of several passers-by—for the whole street was speedily alive with running people—Mr. Vincey struggled to his feet. He at once became the centre of a crowd greedy to see his injury. A multitude of voices com-

THE STOLEN BODY

peted to reassure him of his safety, and then to tell him of the behaviour of the madman, as they regarded Mr. Bessel. He had suddenly appeared in the middle of the market screaming "Life! Life!" striking left and right with a blood-stained walking-stick, and dancing and shouting with laughter at each successful blow. A lad and two women had broken heads, and he had smashed a man's wrist; a little child had been knocked insensible, and for a time he had driven every one before him, so furious and resolute had his behaviour been. Then he made a raid upon a coffee stall, hurled its paraffin flare through the window of the post office, and fled laughing, after stunning the foremost of the two policemen who had the pluck to charge him.

Mr. Vincey's first impulse was naturally to join in the pursuit of his friend, in order if possible to save him from the violence of the indignant people. But his action was slow, the blow had half stunned him, and while this was still no more than a resolution came the news, shouted through the crowd, that Mr. Bessel had eluded his pursuers. At first Mr. Vincey could scarcely credit this, but the universality of the report, and presently the dignified return of two futile policemen, convinced him. After some aimless inquiries he returned towards Staple Inn, padding a handkerchief to a now very painful nose.

He was angry and astonished and perplexed. It appeared to him indisputable that Mr. Bessel must have gone violently mad in the midst of his experiment in thought transference, but why that should make him appear with a sad white face in Mr. Vincey's dreams seemed a problem beyond solution. He racked his brains in vain to explain this. It seemed to him at last that not simply Mr. Bessel, but the order of things must be insane. But he could think of nothing to do. He shut himself carefully into his room, lit his fire—it was a gas fire with asbestos bricks—and, fearing fresh dreams if he went to bed, remained bathing his injured face, or holding up books in a vain attempt to read, until dawn. Throughout that vigil he had a curious persuasion that Mr. Bessel was endeavouring to speak to him, but he would not let himself attend to any such belief.

About dawn, his physical fatigue asserted itself, and he

H. G. WELLS

went to bed and slept at last in spite of dreaming. He rose late, unrested and anxious, and in considerable facial pain. The morning papers had no news of Mr. Bessel's aberration—it had come too late for them. Mr. Vincey's perplexities, to which the fever of his bruise added fresh irritation, became at last intolerable, and, after a fruitless visit to the Albany, he went down to St. Paul's Churchyard to Mr. Hart, Mr. Bessel's partner, and, so far as Mr. Vincey knew, his nearest friend.

He was surprised to learn that Mr. Hart, although he knew nothing of the outbreak, had also been disturbed by a vision, the very vision that Mr. Vincey had seen—Mr. Bessel, white and dishevelled, pleading earnestly by his gestures for help. That was his impression of the import of his signs. "I was just going to look him up in the Albany when you arrived," said Mr. Hart. "I was so sure of something being wrong with him."

As the outcome of their consultation the two gentlemen decided to inquire at Scotland Yard for news of their missing friend. "He is bound to be laid by the heels," said Mr. Hart. "He can't go on at that pace for long." But the police authorities had not laid Mr. Bessel by the heels. They confirmed Mr. Vincey's overnight experiences and added fresh circumstances, some of an even graver character than those he knew—a list of smashed glass along the upper half of Tottenham Court Road, an attack upon a policeman in Hampstead Road, and an atrocious assault upon a woman. All these outrages were committed between half-past twelve and a quarter to two in the morning, and between those hours—and, indeed, from the very moment of Mr. Bessel's first rush from his rooms at half-past nine in the evening—they could trace the deepening violence of his fantastic career. For the last hour, at least from before one, that is, until a quarter to two, he had run amuck through London, eluding with amazing agility every effort to stop or capture him.

But after a quarter to two he had vanished. Up to that hour witnesses were multitudinous. Dozens of people had seen him, fled from him or pursued him, and then things suddenly came to an end. At a quarter to two he had been seen

THE STOLEN BODY

running down the Euston Road towards Baker Street, flourishing a can of burning colza oil and jerking splashes of flame therefrom at the windows of the houses he passed. But none of the policemen on Euston Road beyond the Waxwork Exhibition, nor any of those in the side streets down which he must have passed had he left the Euston Road, had seen anything of him. Abruptly he disappeared. Nothing of his subsequent doings came to light in spite of the keenest inquiry.

Here was a fresh astonishment for Mr. Vincey. He had found considerable comfort in Mr. Hart's conviction: "He is bound to be laid by the heels before long," and in that assurance he had been able to suspend his mental perplexities. But any fresh development seemed destined to add new impossibilities to a pile already heaped beyond the powers of his acceptance. He found himself doubting whether his memory might not have played him some grotesque trick, debating whether any of these things could possibly have happened; and in the afternoon he hunted up Mr. Hart again to share the intolerable weight on his mind. He found Mr. Hart engaged with a well-known private detective, but as that gentleman accomplished nothing in this case, we need not enlarge upon his proceedings.

All that day Mr. Bessel's whereabouts eluded an unceasingly active inquiry, and all that night. And all that day there was a persuasion in the back of Mr. Vincey's mind that Mr. Bessel sought his attention, and all through the night Mr. Bessel with a tear-stained face of anguish pursued him through his dreams. And whenever he saw Mr. Bessel in his dreams he also saw a number of other faces, vague but malignant, that seemed to be pursuing Mr. Bessel.

It was on the following day, Sunday, that Mr. Vincey recalled certain remarkable stories of Mrs. Bullock, the medium, who was then attracting attention for the first time in London. He determined to consult her. She was staying at the house of that well-known inquirer, Dr. Wilson Paget, and Mr. Vincey, although he had never met that gentleman before, repaired to him forthwith with the intention of invoking her help. But scarcely had he mentioned the name of Bessel when Doctor Paget interrupted him.

G. WELLS

"Last night—just at the end," he said, "we had a communication."

He left the room, and returned with a slate on which were certain words written in a handwriting, shaky indeed, but indisputably the handwriting of Mr. Bessel!

"How did you get this?" said Mr. Vincey. "Do you mean—?"

"We got it last night," said Doctor Paget. With numerous interruptions from Mr. Vincey, he proceeded to explain how the writing had been obtained. It appears that in her séances, Mrs. Bullock passes into a condition of trance, her eyes rolling up in a strange way under her eyelids, and her body becoming rigid. She then begins to talk very rapidly, usually in voices other than her own. At the same time one or both of her hands may become active, and if slates and pencils are provided they will then write messages simultaneously with and quite independently of the flow of words from her mouth. By many she is considered an even more remarkable medium than the celebrated Mrs. Piper. It was one of these messages, the one written by her left hand, that Mr. Vincey now had before him. It consisted of eight words written disconnectedly: "George Bessel . . . trial excavn . . . Baker Street . . . help . . . starvation." Curiously enough, neither Doctor Paget nor the two other inquirers who were present had heard of the disappearance of Mr. Bessel—the news of it appeared only in the evening papers of Saturday—and they had put the message aside with many others of a vague and enigmatical sort that Mrs. Bullock has from time to time delivered.

When Doctor Paget heard Mr. Vincey's story, he gave himself at once with great energy to the pursuit of this clue to the discovery of Mr. Bessel. It would serve no useful purpose here to describe the inquiries of Mr. Vincey and himself; suffice it that the clue was a genuine one, and that Mr. Bessel was actually discovered by its aid.

He was found at the bottom of a detached shaft which had been sunk and abandoned at the commencement of the work for the new electric railway near Baker Street Station. His arm and leg and two ribs were broken. The shaft is protected by a hoarding nearly 20 feet high, and over

THE STOLEN BODY

this, incredible as it seems, Mr. Bessel, a stout, middle-aged gentleman, must have scrambled in order to fall down the shaft. He was saturated in colza oil, and the smashed tin lay beside him, but luckily the flame had been extinguished by his fall. And his madness had passed from him altogether. But he was, of course, terribly enfeebled, and at the sight of his rescuers he gave way to hysterical weeping.

In view of the deplorable state of his flat, he was taken to the house of Dr. Hatton in Upper Baker Street. Here he was subjected to a sedative treatment, and anything that might recall the violent crisis through which he had passed was carefully avoided. But on the second day he volunteered a statement.

Since that occasion Mr. Bessel has several times repeated this statement—to myself among other people—varying the details as the narrator of real experiences always does, but never by any chance contradicting himself in any particular. And the statement he makes is in substance as follows.

In order to understand it clearly it is necessary to go back to his experiments with Mr. Vincey before his remarkable attack. Mr. Bessel's first attempts at self-projection, in his experiments with Mr. Vincey, were, as the reader will remember, unsuccessful. But through all of them he was concentrating all his power and will upon getting out of the body—"willing it with all my might," he says. At last, almost against expectation, came success. And Mr. Bessel asserts that he, being alive, did actually, by an effort of will, leave his body and pass into some place or state outside this world.

The release was, he asserts, instantaneous. "At one moment I was seated in my chair, with my eyes tightly shut, my hands gripping the arms of the chair, doing all I could to concentrate my mind on Vincey, and then I perceived myself outside my body—saw my body near me, but certainly not containing me, with the hands relaxing and the head drooping forward on the breast."

Nothing shakes him in his assurance of that release. He describes in a quiet, matter-of-fact way the new sensation he experienced. He felt he had become impalpable

H. G. WELLS

—so much he had expected, but he had not expected to find himself enormously large. So, however, it would seem he became. "I was a great cloud—if I may express it that way—anchored to my body. It appeared to me, at first, as if I had discovered a greater self of which the conscious being in my brain was only a little part. I saw the Albany and Piccadilly and Regent Street and all the rooms and places in the houses, very minute and very bright and distinct, spread out below me like a little city seen from a balloon. Every now and then vague shapes like drifting wreaths of smoke made the vision a little indistinct, but at first I paid little heed to them. The thing that astonished me most, and which astonishes me still, is that I saw quite distinctly the insides of the houses as well as the streets, saw little people dining and talking in the private houses, men and women dining, playing billiards, and drinking in restaurants and hotels, and several places of entertainment crammed with people. It was like watching the affairs of a glass hive."

Such were Mr. Bessel's exact words as I took them down when he told me the story. Quite forgetful of Mr. Vincey, he remained for a space observing these things. Impelled by curiosity, he says, he stooped down, and, with the shadowy arm he found himself possessed of, attempted to touch a man walking along Vigo Street. But he could not do so, though his finger seemed to pass through the man. Something prevented his doing this, but what it was he finds it hard to describe. He compares the obstacle to a sheet of glass.

"I felt as a kitten may feel," he said, "when it goes for the first time to pat its reflection in a mirror." Again and again, on the occasion when I heard him tell this story, Mr. Bessel returned to that comparison of the sheet of glass. Yet it was not altogether a precise comparison, because, as the reader will speedily see, there were interruptions of this generally impermeable resistance, means of getting through the barrier to the material world again. But, naturally, there is a very great difficulty in expressing these unprecedented impressions in the language of everyday experience.

A thing that impressed him instantly, and which weighed

THE STOLEN BODY

upon him throughout all this experience, was the stillness of this place—he was in a world without sound.

At first Mr. Bessel's mental state was an unemotional wonder. His thought chiefly concerned itself with where he might be. He was out of the body—out of his material body, at any rate—but that was not all. He believes, and I for one believe also, that he was somewhere out of space, as we understand it, altogether. By a strenuous effort of will he had passed out of his body into a world beyond this world, a world undreamt of, yet lying so close to it and so strangely situated with regard to it that all things on this earth are clearly visible both from without and from within in this other world about us. For a long time, as it seemed to him, this realisation occupied his mind to the exclusion of all other matters, and then he recalled the engagement with Mr. Vincey, to which this astonishing experience was, after all, but a prelude.

He turned his mind to locomotion in this new body in which he found himself. For a time he was unable to shift himself from his attachment to his earthly carcass. For a time this new strange cloud body of his simply swayed, contracted, expanded, coiled, and writhed with his efforts to free himself, and then quite suddenly the link that bound him snapped. For a moment everything was hidden by what appeared to be whirling spheres of dark vapour, and then through a momentary gap he saw his drooping body collapse limply, saw his lifeless head drop sideways, and found he was driving along like a huge cloud in a strange place of shadowy clouds that had the luminous intricacy of London spread like a model below.

But now he was aware that the fluctuating vapour about him was something more than vapour, and the temerarious excitement of his first essay was shot with fear. For he perceived, at first indistinctly, and then suddenly very clearly, that he was surrounded by faces! that each roll and coil of the seeming cloud-stuff was a face. And such faces! Faces of thin shadow, faces of gaseous tenuity. Faces like those faces that glare with intolerable strangeness upon the sleeper in the evil hours of his dreams. Evil, greedy eyes that were full of a covetous curiosity, faces with

H. G. WELLS

knit brows and snarling, smiling lips; their vague hands clutched at Mr. Bessel as he passed, and the rest of their bodies was but an elusive streak of trailing darkness. Never a word they said, never a sound from the mouths that seemed to gibber. All about him they pressed in that dreamy silence, passing freely through the dim mistiness that was his body, gathering ever more numerous about him. And the shadowy Mr. Bessel, now suddenly fear-stricken, drove through the silent, active multitude of eyes and clutching hands.

So inhuman were these faces, so malignant their staring eyes, and shadowy, clawing gestures, that it did not occur to Mr. Bessel to attempt intercourse with these drifting creatures. Idiot phantoms, they seemed, children of vain desire, beings unborn and forbidden the boon of being, whose only expressions and gestures told of the envy and craving for life that was their one link with existence.

It says much for his resolution that, amidst the swarming cloud of these noiseless spirits of evil, he could still think of Mr. Vincey. He made a violent effort of will and found himself, he knew not how, stooping towards Staple Inn, saw Vincey sitting attentive and alert in his arm-chair by the fire.

And clustering also about him, as they clustered ever about all that lives and breathes, was another multitude of these vain voiceless shadows, longing, desiring, seeking some loophole into life.

For a space Mr. Bessel sought ineffectually to attract his friend's attention. He tried to get in front of his eyes, to move the objects in his room, to touch him. But Mr. Vincey remained unaffected, ignorant of the being that was so close to his own. The strange something that Mr. Bessel has compared to a sheet of glass separated them impermeably.

And at last Mr. Bessel did a desperate thing. I have told how that in some strange way he could see not only the outside of a man as we see him, but within. He extended his shadowy hand and thrust his vague black fingers, as it seemed, through the heedless brain.

Then, suddenly, Mr. Vincey started like a man who

THE STOLEN BODY

recalls his attention from wandering thoughts, and it seemed to Mr. Bessel that a little dark-red body situated in the middle of Mr. Vincey's brain swelled and glowed as he did so. Since that experience he has been shown anatomical figures of the brain, and he knows now that this is that useless structure, as doctors call it, the pineal eye. For, strange as it will seem to many, we have, deep in our brains—where it cannot possibly see any earthly light—an eye! At the time this, with the rest of the internal anatomy of the brain, was quite new to him. At the sight of its changed appearance, however, he thrust forth his finger, and, rather fearful still of the consequences, touched this little spot. And instantly Mr. Vincey started, and Mr. Bessel knew that he was seen.

And at that instant it came to Mr. Bessel that evil had happened to his body, and behold! a great wind blew through all that world of shadows and tore him away. So strong was this persuasion that he thought no more of Mr. Vincey, but turned about forthwith, and all the countless faces drove back with him like leaves before a gale. But he returned too late. In an instant he saw the body that he had left inert and collapsed—lying, indeed, like the body of a man just dead—had arisen, had arisen by virtue of some strength and will beyond his own. It stood with staring eyes, stretching its limbs in dubious fashion.

For a moment he watched it in wild dismay, and then he stooped towards it. But the pane of glass had closed against him again, and he was foiled. He beat himself passionately against this, and all about him the spirits of evil grinned and pointed and mocked. He gave way to furious anger. He compares himself to a bird that has fluttered heedlessly into a room and is beating at the window-pane that holds it back from freedom.

And behold! the little body that had once been his was now dancing with delight. He saw it shouting, though he could not hear its shouts; he saw the violence of its movements grow. He watched it fling his cherished furniture about in the mad delight of existence, rend his books apart, smash bottles, drink heedlessly from the jagged fragments, leap and smite in a passionate acceptance of living. He

H. G. WELLS

watched these actions in paralysed astonishment. Then once more he hurled himself against the impassable barrier, and then with all that crew of mocking ghosts about him, hurried back in dire confusion to Vincey to tell him of the outrage that had come upon him.

But the brain of Vincey was now closed against apparitions, and the disembodied Mr. Bessel pursued him in vain as he hurried out into Holborn to call a cab. Foiled and terror-stricken, Mr. Bessel swept back again, to find his desecrated body whooping in a glorious frenzy down the Burlington Arcade. . . .

And now the attentive reader begins to understand Mr. Bessel's interpretation of the first part of this strange story. The being whose frantic rush through London had inflicted so much injury and disaster had indeed Mr. Bessel's body, but it was not Mr. Bessel. It was an evil spirit out of that strange world beyond existence, into which Mr. Bessel had so rashly ventured. For twenty hours it held possession of him, and for all those twenty hours the dispossessed spirit-body of Mr. Bessel was going to and fro in that unheard-of middle world of shadows seeking help in vain. He spent many hours beating at the minds of Mr. Vincey and of his friend Mr. Hart. Each, as we know, he roused by his efforts. But the language that might convey his situation to these helpers across the gulf he did not know; his feeble fingers groped vainly and powerlessly in their brains. Once, indeed, as we have already told, he was able to turn Mr. Vincey aside from his path so that he encountered the stolen body in its career, but he could not make him understand the thing that had happened: he was unable to draw any help from that encounter. . . .

All through those hours the persuasion was overwhelming in Mr. Bessel's mind that presently his body would be killed by his furious tenant, and he would have to remain in this shadow-land for evermore. So that those long hours were a growing agony of fear. And ever as he hurried to and fro in his ineffectual excitement, innumerable spirits of that world about him mobbed him and confused his mind. And ever an envious applauding multitude poured after their successful fellow as he went upon his glorious career.

THE STOLEN BODY

For that, it would seem, must be the life of these bodiless things of this world that is the shadow of our world. Ever they watch, coveting a way into a mortal body, in order that they may descend, as furies and frenzies, as violent lusts and mad, strange impulses, rejoicing in the body they have won. For Mr. Bessel was not the only human soul in that place. Witness the fact that he met first one, and afterwards several shadows of men, men like himself, it seemed, who had lost their bodies even it may be as he had lost his, and wandered, despairingly, in that lost world that is neither life nor death. They could not speak because that world is silent, yet he knew them for men because of their dim human bodies, and because of the sadness of their faces.

But how they had come into that world he could not tell, nor where the bodies they had lost might be, whether they still raved about the earth, or whether they were closed forever in death against return. That they were the spirits of the dead neither he nor I believe. But Doctor Wilson Paget thinks they are the rational souls of men who are lost in madness on the earth.

At last Mr. Bessel chanced upon a place where a little crowd of such disembodied silent creatures was gathered, and thrusting through them he saw below a brightly-lit room, and four or five quiet gentlemen and a woman, a stoutish woman dressed in black bombazine and sitting awkwardly in a chair with her head thrown back. He knew her from her portraits to be Mrs. Bullock, the medium. And he perceived that tracts and structures in her brain glowed and stirred as he had seen the pineal eye in the brain of Mr. Vincey glow. The light was very fitful; sometimes it was a broad illumination, and sometimes merely a faint twilight spot, and it shifted slowly about her brain. She kept on talking and writing with one hand. And Mr. Bessel saw that the crowding shadows of men about him, and a great multitude of the shadow spirits of that shadowland, were all striving and thrusting to touch the lighted regions of her brain. As one gained her brain or another was thrust away, her voice and the writing of her hand changed. So that what she said was disorderly and confused for the most part; now a fragment of one soul's message, and now

H. G. WELLS

a fragment of another's, and now she babbled the insane fancies of the spirits of vain desire. Then Mr. Bessel understood that she spoke for the spirit that had touch of her, and he began to struggle very furiously towards her. But he was on the outside of the crowd and at that time he could not reach her, and at last, growing anxious, he went away to find what had happened meanwhile to his body.

For a long time he went to and fro seeking it in vain and fearing that it must have been killed, and then he found it at the bottom of the shaft in Baker Street, writhing furiously and cursing with pain. Its leg and an arm and two ribs had been broken by its fall. Moreover, the evil spirit was angry because his time had been so short and because of the pain—making violent movements and casting his body about.

And at that Mr. Bessel returned with redoubled earnestness to the room where the séance was going on, and so soon as he had thrust himself within sight of the place he saw one of the men who stood about the medium looking at his watch as if he meant that the séance should presently end. At that a great number of the shadows who had been striving turned away with gestures of despair. But the thought that the séance was almost over only made Mr. Bessel the more earnest, and he struggled so stoutly with his will against the others that presently he gained the woman's brain. It chanced that just at that moment it glowed very brightly, and in that instant she wrote the message that Doctor Willson Paget preserved. And then the other shadows and the cloud of evil spirits about him had thrust Mr. Bessel away from her, and for all the rest of the séance he could regain her no more.

So he went back and watched through the long hours at the bottom of the shaft where the evil spirit lay in the stolen body it had maimed, writhing and cursing, and weeping and groaning, and learning the lesson of pain. And towards dawn the thing he had waited for happened, the brain glowed brightly and the evil spirit came out, and Mr. Bessel entered the body he had feared he should never enter again. As he did so, the silence—the brooding silence—ended; he heard the tumult of traffic and the voices of people overhead, and

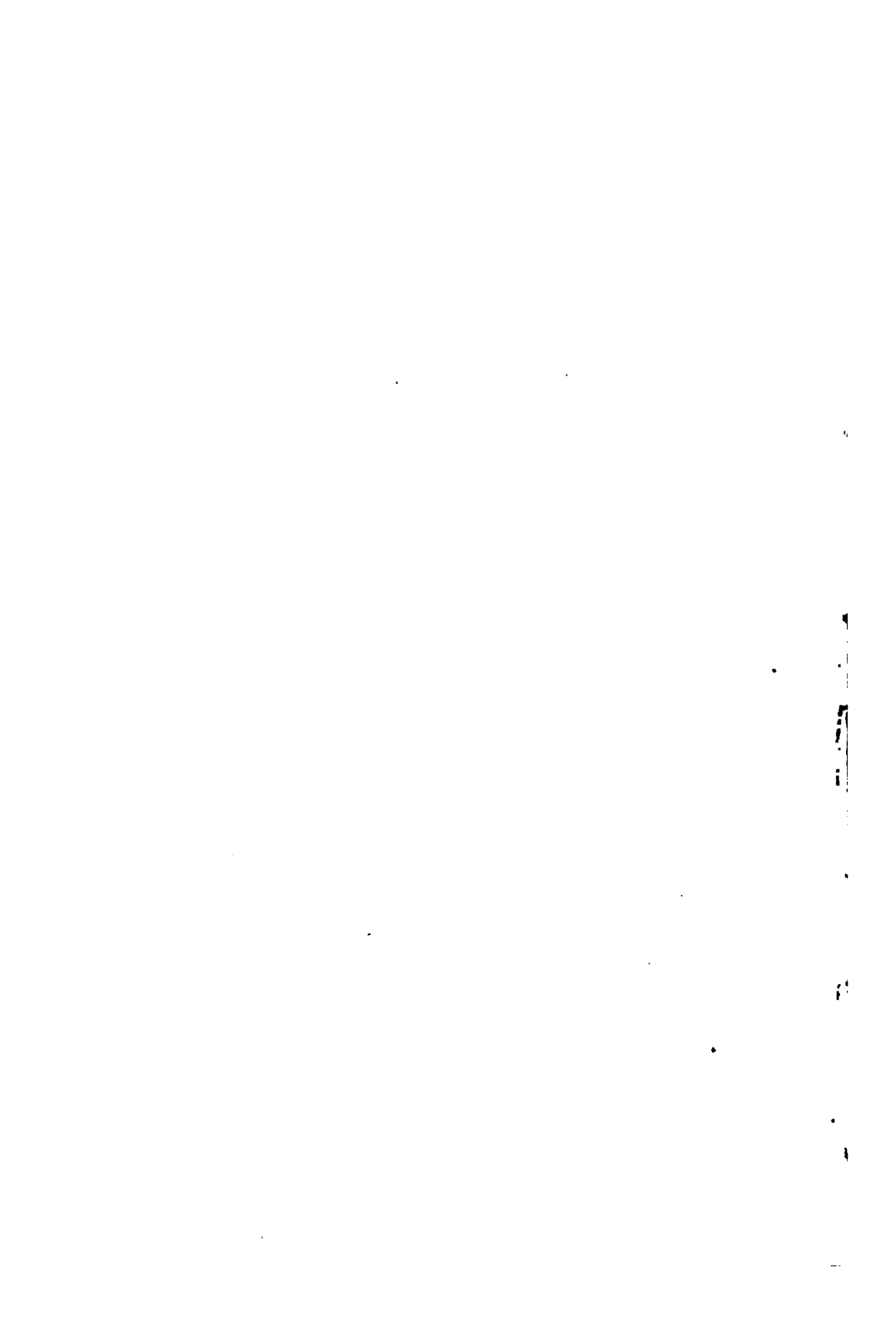
THE STOLEN BODY

that strange world that is the shadow of our world—the dark and silent shadows of ineffectual desire and the shadows of lost men—vanished clean away.

He lay there for the space of about three hours before he was found. And in spite of the pain and suffering of his wounds, and of the dim damp place in which he lay; in spite of the tears—wrung from him by his physical distress—his heart was full of gladness to know that he was nevertheless back once more in the kindly world of men.

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL



THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

By W. CLARK RUSSELL

I STEPPED into the Brunswick Hotel in the East India Docks for a glass of ale. It was in the year 1853, and a wet, hot afternoon. I had been on the tramp all day, making just three weeks of a wretched, hopeless hunt after a situation on shipboard, and every bone in me ached with my heart. My precious timbers, how poor I was! Two shillings, and threepence—that was all the money I possessed in the wide world, and when I had paid for the ale, I was poorer yet by twopence.

A number of nautical men of various grades were drinking at the bar. I sat down in a corner to rest, and abandoned myself to the most dismal reflections. I wanted to get out to Australia, and nobody, it seems, was willing to ship me in any situation on any account whatever. Captains and mates howled me off if I attempted to cross their gangways. Nothing was to be got in the shipping yards. The very crimps sneered at me when I told them that I wanted a berth. "Shake your head, my hawbuck," said one of them, in the presence of a crowd of grinning seamen, "that the Johns may see the hayseed fly."

What was I, do you ask? I'll tell you. I was one of ten children whose father had been a clergyman, and the income "from all sources" of that same clergyman had never exceeded £230 a year. I was a lumbering, hulking lad, without friends, and, as I am now perfectly sensible, without brains, without any kind of taste for any pursuit, execrating the notion of clerkships, and perfectly willing to make away with myself sooner than be glued to a three-legged stool. But enough of this. The long and short is, I was thirsting to get out to Australia, never doubting that I should easily make my fortune there.

Copyright 1893 and 1894 by W. Clark Russell.
Copyright 1895 by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

W. CLARK RUSSELL

I sat in my corner in the Brunswick Hotel, scowling at the floor, my long legs thrust out, and my hands buried deep in my breeches pockets. Presently, I was sensible that some one stood beside me, and looking up, I beheld a young fellow staring with all his might, with a slow grin of recognition wrinkling his face. I seemed to remember him.

"Mr. William Peploe, ain't it?" said he.

"Why yes," said I, "and you—and you——?"

"You don't remember Jem Back then, sir?"

"Yes I do, perfectly well. Sit down, Back. Are you a sailor? I am so dead beat that I can scarcely talk."

Jem Back brought a tankard of ale to my table, and sat down beside me. He was a youth of my own age, and I knew him as the son of a parishioner of my father. He was attired in nautical clothes, yet somehow he did not exactly look what is called a sailor man. We fell into conversation. He informed me that he was an under-steward on board a large ship called the "Huntress," that was bound out of the Thames in a couple of days for Sydney, New South Wales. He had sailed two years in her, and hoped to sign as head steward next voyage in a smaller ship.

"There'll be a good deal of waiting this bout," said he; "we're taking a cuddy full of swells out. There's Sir Thomas Mason—he goes as Governor; there's his lady and three daughters, and a sort of suet" (he meant suite) "sails along with the boiling." So he rattled on.

"Can't you help me to find a berth in that ship?" said I.

"I'm afraid not," he answered. "What could you offer yourself as, sir? They wouldn't have you forward, and aft we're chock-a-block. If you could manage to stow yourself away—they wouldn't chuck you overboard when you turned up at sea; they'd make you useful and land you as safe as if you was the Governor himself."

I thought this a very fine idea, and asked Back to tell me how I should go to work to hide myself. He seemed to recoil, I thought, when I put the matter to him earnestly, but he was an honest, kindly-hearted fellow, and remembered my father with a certain degree of respect, and even of affection; he had known me as a boy; there was the sympathy of association and of memory between us; he looked at the old suit

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

of clothes I sat in, and at my hollow, anxious face, and he crooked his eyebrows with an expression of pain when I told him that all the money I had was two and a penny, and that I must starve and be found floating a corpse in the dockyard basin if I did not get out to Australia. We sat for at least an hour over our ale, talking very earnestly, and when we arose and bade each other farewell I had settled with him what to do.

The "Huntress" was a large frigate-built ship of 1400 tons. On the morning of the day on which she was to haul out of dock I went on board of her. Nobody took any notice of me. The vessel was full of business, clamorous with the life and hurry of the start for the other side of the world. Cargo was still swinging over the main hold, down whose big, dark square a tall, strong, red-bearded chief mate was roaring to the stevedore's men engulfed in the bowels of the ship. A number of drunken sailors were singing and cutting capers on the forecastle. The main-deck was full of steerage, or, as they were then termed, 'tweendeck passengers—grimy men, and seedy women and wailing babes, and frightened, staring children. I did not pause to muse upon the scene, nor did I gaze aloft at the towering spars, where, forward, up in the dingy sky of the Isle of Dogs, floated that familiar symbol of departure, Blue Peter. I saw several young men in shining buttons and cloth caps with gold badges, and knew them to be midshipmen, and envied them. Every instant I expected to be ordered out of the ship by some one with hurricane lungs and a vast command of injurious language, and my heart beat fast. I made my way to the cuddy front, and just as I halted beside a group of women at the booby hatch, James Back came to the door of the saloon. He motioned to me with a slight toss of his head.

"Don't look about you," he whispered; "just follow me straight."

I stepped after him into the saloon. It was like entering a grand drawing-room. Mirrors and silver lamps sparkled; the panelled bulkheads were rich with hand paintings; flowers hung in plenty under the skylight; goldfish gleamed as they circled in globes of crystal. These things and more I beheld in the space of a few heart-beats.

W. CLARK RUSSELL

I went after James Back down a wide staircase that sank through a large hatch situated a dozen paces from the cuddy front. When I reached the bottom I found myself in a long corridor, somewhat darksome, with cabins on either hand. Back took me into one of those cabins and closed the door.

"Now listen, Mr. Peploe," said he. "I'm going to shut you down in the lazarette." He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, on which was a rude tracing. "This is the inside of the lazarette," he continued, pointing to the tracing. "There are some casks of flour up in this corner. They'll make you a safe hiding-place. You'll find a bag of ship's biscuit and some bottles of wine and water and a pannikin stowed behind them casks. There's cases of bottled ale in the lazarette, and plenty of tinned stuffs and grub for the cabin table. But don't broach anything if you can hold out."

"When am I to show myself?"

"When we're out of Soundings."

"Where's that?" said I.

"Clear of the Chops," he answered. "If you come up when the land's still in sight the captain'll send you ashore by anything that'll take you, and you'll be handed over to the authorities and charged."

"How shall I know when we're clear of the Chops?" said I.

"I'll drop below into the lazarette on some excuse and tell you," he answered. "You'll be very careful when you turn up, Mr. Peploe, not to let them guess that anybody's lent you a hand in this here hiding job. If they find out I'm your friend, then it's all up with Jam Back. He's a stone-broke young man, and his parents'll be wishing of themselves dead rather than they should have lived to see this hour."

"I have sworn, and you may trust me, Back."

"Right," said he. "And now, is there e'er a question you'd like to ask before you drop below?"

"When does the ship haul out?"

"They may be doing of it even whilst we're talking," he said.

"Can I make my escape out of the lazarette should I feel very ill, or as if I was going to suffocate?"

"Yes, the hatch is a little un. The cargo sits tall under

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

him, and you can stand up and shove the hatch clear of its bearings should anything go seriously wrong with you. But don't be in a hurry to feel ill or short o' breath. There's no light, but there's air enough. The united smells, perhaps, ain't all violets, but the place is warm."

He paused, looking at me inquiringly. I could think of nothing more to ask him. He opened the door, warily peered out, then whispered to me to follow, and I walked at his heels to the end of the corridor near the stern. I heard voices in the cabins on either hand of me; some people came out of one of the after berths, and passed us, talking noisily, but they took no heed of me or of my friend. They were passengers, and strangers to the ship, and would suppose me a passenger also, or an under-steward, like Jem Back, who, however, now looked his vocation, attired as he was in a camlet jacket, black cloth breeches, and a white shirt.

We halted at a little hatch-like trap-door a short way forward of the bulkheads of the stern cabins. Back grasped the ring in the center of the hatch, and easily lifted the thing, and laid open the hold.

"All's clear," said he, looking along the corridor. "Down with you, Mr. Peploe." I peered into the abyss, as it seemed to me; the light hereabouts was so dim that but little of it fell through the small square of hatchway, and I could scarcely discern the outlines of the cargo below. I put my legs over and sank, holding on with a first voyager's grip to the coaming of the hatch; then, feeling the cargo under my feet, I let go, and the instant I withdrew my hands, Back popped the hatch on.

The blackness was awful. It affected me for some minutes like the want of air. I thought I should smother, and could hardly hinder myself from thrusting the hatch up for light, and for the comfort of my lungs. Presently the sense of suffocation passed. The corridor was uncarpeted; I heard the sounds of footsteps on the bare planks overhead, and, never knowing but that at any moment somebody might come into this lazarette, I very cautiously began to grope my way over the cargo. I skinned my hands and my knees, and cut my small clothes against all sorts of sharp edges in a very short time. I never could have realized the like of

W. CLARK RUSSELL

such a blackness as I was here groping through. The deepest midnight overhung by the electric cloud would be as bright as dawn or twilight compared to it.

I carried, however, in my head the sketch Back had drawn of this interior, and remembering that I had faced aft when my companion had closed me down, I crawled in the direction in which I imagined the casks and my stock of bread and wine lay; and to my great joy, after a considerable bit of crawling and clawing about, during which I repeatedly wounded myself, I touched a canvas bag, which I felt, and found full of ship's bread, and on putting my hand out in another direction, but close by where the bag was, I touched a number of bottles. On this I felt around, carefully stroking the blackness with my maimed hands, and discovered that I had crawled into a recess formed by the stowage of a number of casks on their bilge; a little space was left behind them and the ship's wall; it was the hiding-place Back had indicated, and I sat down to breathe and think, and to collect my wits.

I had no means of making a light; but I don't believe that in any case I should have attempted to kindle a flame, so great would have been my terror of setting the ship on fire. I kept my eyes shut, fancying that that would be a good way to accustom my vision to the blackness. And here I very inopportunately recollected that one of the most dreadful prison punishments inflicted upon mutinous and ill-behaved felons is the locking of them up in a black room, where it is thought proper not to keep them very long lest they should go mad; and I wondered how many days or hours it would take to make a lunatic of me in this lazarette, that was as black certainly as any black room ever built for refractory criminals.

I had no clothes save those I wore. Stowaways as a rule do not carry much luggage to sea with them. I had heard tell of ships' slop-chests, however, and guessed, when I was enlarged and put to work, the captain would let me choose a suit of clothes and pay for them out of my wages. I did not then know that it is not customary for commanders of ships to pay stowaways for their services. Indeed, I afterwards got to hear that far better men than the average run of stow-

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

away were, in their anxiety to get abroad, very willing to sign articles for a shilling a month, and lead the lives of dogs for that wage.

I had come into the ship with a parcel of bread and cheese in my pocket: feeling hungry I partook of this modest refreshment, and clawing round touched a bottle, pulled the loosely-fitted cork out, and drank. This small repast heartened me, I grew a little less afraid of the profound blackness, and of the blue and green lights which came and went upon it, and began to hope I should not go mad.

The hours sneaked along. Now and again a sort of creaking noise ran through the interior, which made me suppose that the ship was proceeding down the river in tow of a tug. Occasionally I heard the tread of passengers overhead. It pleased me to hear that sound. It soothed me by diminishing the intolerable sense of loneliness bred by the midnight blackness in which I lay. The atmosphere was warm, but I drew breath without difficulty. The general smell was, indeed, a complicated thing; in fact, the lazarette was a storeroom. I seemed to taste ham, tobacco, cheese, and fifty other such matters in the air.

I had slept very ill on the preceding night, and after I had been for some hours in the lazarette I felt weary, and stretched myself along the deck between the casks and the ship's wall, and pillowed my head on my coat. I slept, and my slumber was deep and long. My dreams were full of pleasing imaginations—of nuggets of extraordinary size, chiefly, and leagues of rich pasture land whitened by countless sheep, all branded with the letter P. But after I had awakened and gathered my wits together, I understood that I had lost all count of time, that I should not know what o'clock it was, and whether it was day or night, until I had got out. I was glad to find that the blackness was not so intolerable as I had dreaded. I felt for the biscuits and bottles, and ate and drank as appetite dictated. Nobody in all this while lifted the hatch. No doubt the steward had plenty of stores for current use in hand, and there might be no need to break out fresh provisions for some weeks.

I had lain, according to my own computation, very nearly two days in this black hole, when I felt a movement in the

W. CLARK RUSSELL

ship which immediately upset my stomach. The vessel, I might suppose, was in the Channel; her pitching grew heavier, the lazarette was right aft, and in no part of the vessel saving the bows could her motion be more sensibly felt. I was speedily overcome with nausea, and for many long hours lay miserably ill, unable to eat or drink. At the expiration of this time the sea ran more smoothly; at all events, the ship's motion grew gentle; the feeling of sickness suddenly passed, leaving me, indeed, rather weak, yet not so helpless but that I could sit up and drink from a bottle of wine and water, and eat a dry ship's biscuit.

Whilst I was munching the tasteless piece of sea bread, sitting in the intense blackness, pining for the fresh air and the sunshine, and wondering how much longer I was to wait for Back's summons to emerge, the hatch was raised. I shrank and held my breath, with my hand grasping the biscuit poised midway to my mouth, as though I had been withered by a blast of lightning. A faint sheen floated in the little square. It was the dim lustre of distant lamplight, whence I guessed it was night. The figure of a man cautiously dropped through the hatchway, and by some means, and all very silently, he contrived to readjust the hatch, shutting himself down as Back had shut me down. The motion of the ship, as I have said, was gentle, the creaking noises throughout the working fabric were dim and distant; indeed, I could hear the man breathing as he seemed to pause after bringing the hatchway to its bearings over his head. I did not suppose that the captain ever entered this part of the ship. The man, for all I could conjecture, might be one of the mates, or the boatswain, or the head steward, visiting the lazarette on some errand of duty, and coming down very quietly that the passengers who slept in the cabins on either hand the corridor should not be disturbed. Accordingly, I shrank into the compactest posture I could contort myself into, and watched.

A lucifer match was struck; the flame threw out the figure of a man standing on the cargo just under the hatch; he pulled out a little bull's-eye lamp from his pocket and lighted it, and carefully extinguished the match. The long, misty beam of the magnified flame swept the interior like the

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

revolving spoke of a wheel as the man slowly turned the lens about in a critical search of the place, himself being in blackness. The line of light broke on the casks behind which I crouched, and left me in deep shadow unperceived. After some minutes of this sort of examination, the man came a little way forward and crouched down upon a bale or something of the sort directly abreast of the casks, through whose cant-lines I was peering. He opened the lamp and placed it beside him; the light was then full upon his figure.

He might have been an officer of the ship for all I knew. His dress was not distinguishable, but I had his face very plain in my sight. He was extremely pale; his nose was long and aquiline; he wore moustaches, whiskers, and a short beard, black, but well streaked with grey. His eyebrows were bushy and dark; his eyes were black, and the reflected lamplight shot in gleams from them, like to that level spoke of radiance with which he had swept this lazarette. His hair was unusually long, even for that age of the fashion, and his being without a hat made me guess he was not from the deck, though I never doubted that he was one of the ship's company.

When he opened the bull's-eye lamp and put it down, he drew something out of his pocket which glittered in his hand. I strained my sight, yet should not have managed to make out what he grasped but for his holding it close to the light; I then saw that it was a small circular brass box; a kind of little metal cylinder, from whose side fell a length of black line, just as tape draws out of a yard measure. He talked to himself, with a sort of wild, scowling grin upon his face, whilst he inspected his brass box and little length of line; he then shut the lamp and flashed it upon what I saw was a medium-sized barrel, such, perhaps, as a brewer would call a four-and-a-half gallon cask. It rested on its bilge, after the manner in which the casks behind which I lay hidden were stowed.

I now saw him pull a spile or spike of wood out of the head of the barrel, and insert the end of the black line attached to the small brass piece in the orifice. This done he fitted a key to the brass box and wound it up. He may

W. CLARK RUSSELL

have taken twenty turns with the key; the lazarette was so quiet that I could distinctly hear the harsh grit of the mechanism as it was revolved. All the while he was thus employed he preserved his scowling smile, and whispered to himself. After he had wound up the piece of clockwork he placed it on the bale where his lamp had stood, and taking the light made for the hatchway, under which he came to a stand whilst he extinguished the bull's-eye. I then heard him replace the hatch, and knew he was gone.

The arrangement he had wound up ticked with the noise of a Dutch clock. I had but little brains in those days, as I have told you, and in sad truth I am not overloaded with that particular sort of cargo at this hour; but I was not such a fool as not to be able to guess what the man intended to do, and what that hollow, desperate ticking signified. Oh, my great God, I thought to myself, it is an infernal machine! and the ship will be blown up!

My horror and fright went far beyond the paralyzing form; they ran a sort of madness into my blood and vitalized me into desperate instant action. Utterly heedless now of hurting and wounding myself, I scrambled over the casks, directed by the noise of the ticking, stretched forth my hand and grasped the brass machine. I fiercely tugged it, then feeling for the slow match, as I guessed the line to be, I ran it through my fingers to make sure I had pulled the end out of the barrel. The murderous thing ticked in my hand with the energy of a hotly-revolved capstan, whilst I stood breathing short, considering what I should do, whilst the perspiration soaked through my clothes as though a bucket of oil had been upset over me. Heavens! the horror of standing in that black lazarette with an infernal machine ticking in my hands, and a large barrel of gunpowder, as I easily guessed, within reach of a kick of my foot! I trembled in every limb and sweated at every pore, and seemed to want brains enough to tell me what ought next to be done!

How long I thus stood irresolute I don't know; still clutching the hoarsely-ticking piece of clockwork. I crawled in the direction in which I supposed lay the casks behind which I had hidden. I had scarcely advanced half a dozen

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

feet when the mechanism snapped in my fingers; a bright flash, like to the leap of a flame in the pan of a flint musket, irradiated the lazarette; the match was kindled, and burnt freely. The first eating spark was but small; I extinguished the fiery glow between my thumb and forefinger, squeezing it in my terror with the power of the human jaw. The ticking ceased; the murderous thing lay silent and black in my hand. I waited for some minutes to recover myself, and then made up my mind to get out of the lazarette and go on deck, and tell the people that there was a barrel of gunpowder in the after-hold, and that I had saved the ship from having her side or stern blown out.

I pocketed the brass box and match, but it took me above half an hour to get out of the infernal hole. I fell into crevices, went sprawling over pointed edges, and twice came very near to breaking my leg. Happily, I was tall, and when I stood on the upper tier of cargo I could feel the deck above me, and once, whilst thus groping, I touched the edge of the hatchway, thrust up the cover, and got out.

I walked straight down the corridor, which was sown with passengers' boots, mounted the wide staircase, and gained the quarter-deck. I reeled and nearly fell, so intoxicating was the effect of the gushing draught of sweet, fresh night-wind after the stagnant, cheesy atmosphere of the lazarette. A bull's-eye shone on the face of a clock under the break of the poop; the hour was twenty minutes after two. Nothing stirred on the main deck and waist; the forward part of the ship was hidden in blackness. She was sailing on a level keel before the wind, and the pallid spaces of her canvas soared to the trucks, wan as the delicate curls and shreds of vapor which floated under the bright stars.

I ascended a flight of steps which led to the poop, and saw the shadowy figures of two midshipmen walking on one side the deck, whilst on the other side, abreast of the mizzen rigging, stood a third person. I guessed by his being alone that he was the officer of the watch, and stepped over to him. He drew himself erect as I approached, and sang out, "Hallo! who the devil are you?"

"I'm just out of your lazarette," said I, "where I've saved

W. CLARK RUSSELL

this ship from having her stern blown out by an infernal machine!"

He bent his head forward and stared into my face, but it was too dark for him to make anything of me. I reckoned he was the second mate; his outline against the stars defined a square, bullet-headed, thick-necked man. On a sudden he bawled out to the two midshipmen, who had come to a stand on t'other side the skylight--

"Mr. Freeling, jump below and call the captain. Beg him to come on deck at once, young gentleman."

The midshipman rushed into the cuddy.

"What's this yarn about blowing out the ship's stern?" continued the second mate, as I rightly took him to be.

I related my story as straightforwardly as my command of words permitted. I told him that I had wanted to get to Australia, that I was too poor to pay my passage, that I had been unable to find employment on board ship, that I had hidden myself in the lasarette of the "Huntress," and that whilst there, and within the past hour, I had seen a man fit a slow match into what I reckoned was a barrel of gunpowder, and disappear after setting his infernal machine a-going. And thus speaking, I pulled the machine out of my pocket, and put it into his hand.

At this moment the captain arrived on deck. He was a tall man, with a very deep voice, slow, cool, and deliberate in manner and speech.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, and instantly added, "Who is this man?"

The second mate gave him my story almost as I had delivered it.

The captain listened in silence, took the infernal machine, stepped to the skylight, under which a lamp was dimly burning, and examined the piece of mechanism. His manner of handling it by some means sprang the trigger, which struck the flint, and there flashed out a little sun-bright flame that fired the match. I jumped to his side and squeezed the fire out between my thumb and forefinger as before. The captain told the two midshipmen to rouse up the chief mate and send the boatswain and carpenter aft.

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

"Let there be no noise," said he to the second mate. "We want no panic aboard us. Describe the man," said he, addressing me, "whom you saw fitting this apparatus to the barrel." I did so. "Do you recognize the person by this lad's description?" said the captain to the second mate.

The second mate answered that he knew no one on board who answered to the likeness I had drawn.

"Gentlemen, I swear he's in the ship!" I cried, and described him again as I had seen him when the open bull's-eye allowed the light to stream fair upon his face.

But now the arrival of the chief officer, the boatswain, and the carpenter occasioned some bustle. My story was hastily re-told. The carpenter fetched a lantern, and the whole group examined the infernal machine by the clear light.

"There's no question as to the object of this piece of clockwork, sir," said the chief officer.

"None," exclaimed the captain; "it flashed a few minutes ago in my hand. The thing seems alive. Softly, now. The passengers mustn't hear of this: there must be no panic. Take the boatswain and carpenter along with you, Mr. Morritt, into the lazarette. But mind your fire." And he then told them where the barrel was stowed as I had described it.

The three men left the poop. The captain now examined me afresh. He showed no temper whatever at my having hidden myself on board his ship. All his questions concerned the appearance of the man who had adjusted the machine, how he had gone to work, what he had said when he talked to himself—but this question I could not answer. When he had ended his inquiries he sent for the chief steward, to whom he related what had happened, and then asked him if there was such a person in the ship as I had described. The man answered there was.

"What's his name?"

"He's booked as John Howland, sir. He's a steerage passenger. His cabin's No. 2 on the starboard side. His meals are taken to him in his cabin, and I don't think he's ever been out of it since he came aboard."

"Go and see if he's in his cabin," said the captain.

W. CLARK RUSSELL

As the steward left the poop the chief mate, the boatswain, and carpenter returned.

"It's as the young man states, sir," said Mr. Morritt. "There's a barrel of gunpowder stowed where he says it is with a hole in the head ready to receive the end of a fuse."

"Presently clear it out, and get it stowed away in the magazine," said the captain, calmly. "This has been a narrow escape. Carpenter, go forward and bring a set of irons along. Is there only one barrel of gunpowder below, d'ye say, Mr. Morritt?"

"No more, sir."

"How could such a thing find its way into the lazarette?" said the captain, addressing the second mate.

"God alone knows!" burst out the other. "It'll have come aboard masked in some way, and it deceived me. Unless there's the hand of a lumper in the job—does he know no more about it than what he says?" he cried, rounding upon me.

At this moment the steward came rushing from the companion way, and said to the captain, in a trembling voice, "The man lies dead in his bunk, sir, with his throat horribly cut."

"Come you along with us," said the captain, addressing me, and the whole of us, saving the carpenter and second mate, went below.

We walked along the corridor obedient to the captain's whispered injunction to tread lightly, and make no noise. The midnight lantern faintly illuminated the length of the long after passage. The steward conducted us to a cabin that was almost right aft, and threw open the door. A bracket lamp filled the interior with light. There were two bunks under the porthole, and in the lower bunk lay the figure of the man I had beheld in the lazarette. His throat was terribly gashed, and his right hand still grasped the razor with which the wound had been inflicted.

"Is that the man?" said the captain.

"That's the man," I answered, trembling from head to foot, and sick and faint with the horror of the sight.

"Steward, fetch the doctor," said the captain, "and tell the carpenter we shan't want any irons here."

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

The narrative of my tragic experience may be completed by the transcription of two newspaper accounts, which I preserve pasted in a commonplace book. The first is from the Sydney Morning Herald. After telling about the arrival of the Huntress, and the disembarkation of his Excellency and suite, the writer proceeds thus:—

"When the ship was five days out from the Thames an extraordinary incident occurred. A young man named William Peploe, a stowaway, whilst hidden in the lazarette of the vessel, saw a man enter the place in which he was hiding and attach a slow match and an infernal machine to a barrel of gunpowder stored amidships of the lazarette, and, from what we can gather, on top of the cargo! When the man left the hold young Peploe heroically withdrew the match from the powder and carried the machine on deck. The youth described the man, who proved to be a second-class passenger, who had embarked under the name of John Howland. When the villain's cabin was entered he was found lying in his bunk dead, with a severe wound in his throat inflicted by his own hand. No reason is assigned for this dastardly attempt to destroy a valuable ship and cargo and a company of souls numbering two hundred and ten, though there seems little reason to doubt that the man was mad. It is certain that but for the fortunate circumstance of young Peploe lying hidden in the lazarette the ship's stern or side would have been blown out, and she must have gone down like a stone, carrying all hands with her. On the passengers in due course being apprised of their narrow escape, a purse of a hundred guineas was subscribed and presented by his Excellency to young Peploe. The captain granted him a free passage and provided him with a comfortable outfit from the ship's slop-chest. It is also understood that some situation under the Government has been promised to Mr. William Peploe in consideration of the extraordinary service rendered on this memorable occasion."

My next quotation is from the pages of the Nautical Magazine, dated two years subsequent to the publication of the above in the Australian paper:—

"A bottle was picked up in March last upon the beach of Terceira, one of the Azores, containing a paper bearing a

THE LAZARETTE OF THE "HUNTRESS"

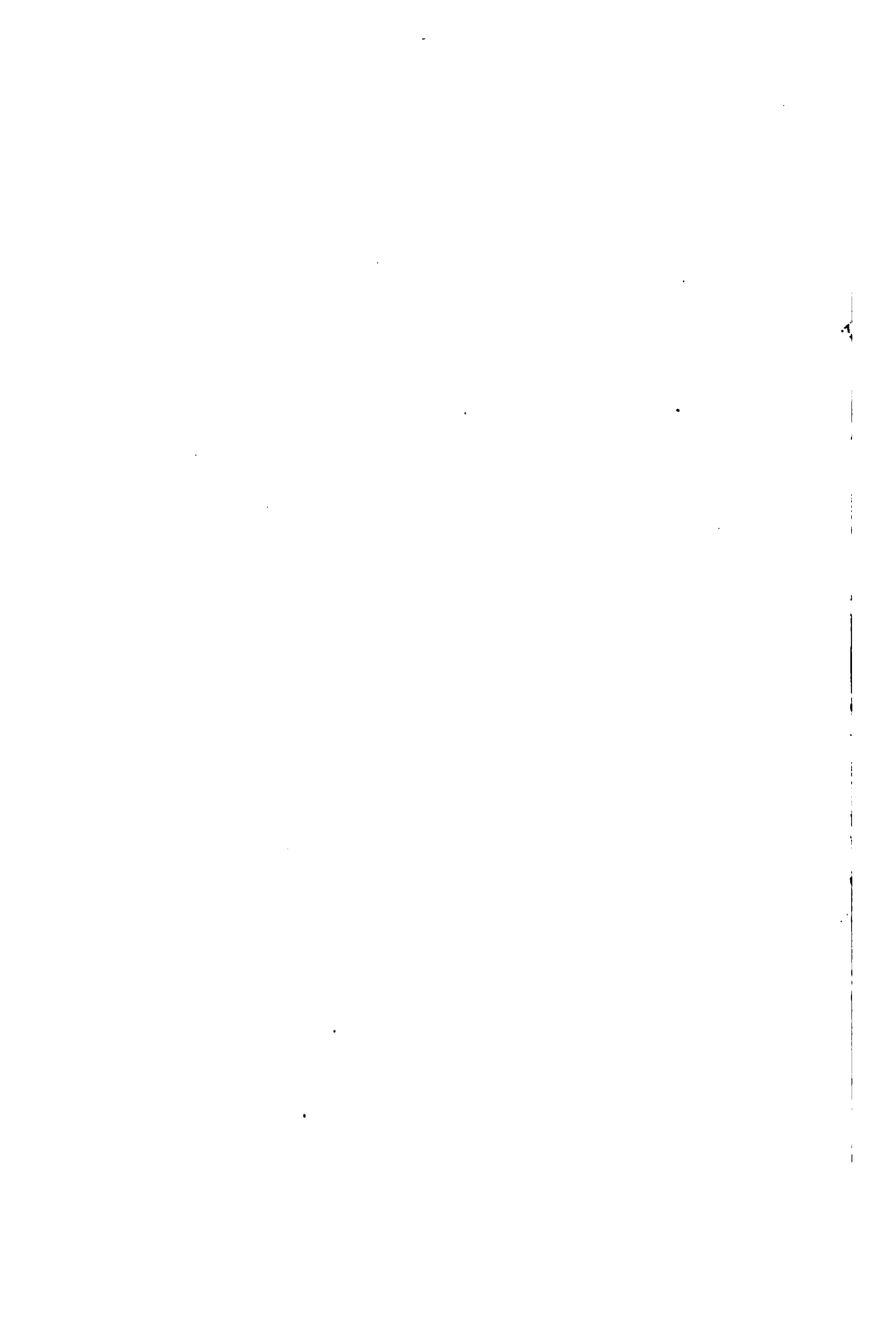
narrative which, unless it be a hoax, seems to throw some light on the mysterious affair of the *Huntress*, for the particulars of which we refer our readers to our volume of last year. The paper, as transmitted by the British Consul, is as follows:—

"*Ship Huntress.* At sea, such and such a date, 1833.

"I, who am known on board this vessel as John Howland, am the writer of this document. Twenty years ago I was unjustly sentenced to a term of transportation across seas, and my treatment at Norfolk Island was such that I vowed by the God who made me to be revenged on the man who, acting on the representation of his creatures, had caused me to be sent from Hobart Town to that hellish penal settlement. That man, with his wife and children, attended by a suite, is a passenger in this ship, and I have concerted my plan to dispatch him and those who may be dear to him to that Devil to whom the wretch consigned my soul when he ordered me to be sent as a further punishment to Norfolk Island. The destruction of this ship is ensured. Nothing can avert it. A barrel of gunpowder was stowed by well-bribed hands in the East India Docks in the lazarette, to which part of the hold access is easy by means of a small trap door. I am writing this three-quarters of an hour before I proceed to the execution of my scheme, and the realisation of my dream of vengeance. When I have completed this document I will place it in a bottle, which I shall carefully cork and seal and cast into the sea through my cabin port-hole. I am sorry for the many who must suffer because of the sins of one; but that one must perish, and immediately, in which hope, craving that, when this paper is found it may be transmitted to the authorities at home, so that the fate of my bitter enemy may be known, I subscribe myself,

"ISRAEL THOMAS WILKINSON,
"Ex-Convict and Ticket-of-Leave Man."

THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL
BY CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT



THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL

By CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT

JACK walked up to the boatswain, and, taking off his hat, with the utmost politeness, said to him: "If I mistake not, Mr. Biggs, your conversation refers to me."

"Very likely it does," replied the boatswain. "Listeners hear no good of themselves."

"It happens that gentlemen can't converse without being vatched," continued Mr. Easthupp, pulling up his shirt-collar."

"It is not the first time you have thought proper to make very offensive remarks, Mr. Biggs; and as you appear to consider yourself ill-treated in the affair of the trousers, for I tell you at once that it was I who brought them on board, I can only say," continued our hero, with a very polite bow, "that I shall be most happy to give you satisfaction."

"I am your superior officer, Mr. Easy," replied the boatswain.

"Yes, by the rules of the service; but you just now asserted that you would waive your rank: indeed, I dispute it on this occasion; I am on the quarter-deck, and you are not."

"This is the gentleman whom you have insulted, Mr. Easy," replied the boatswain, pointing to the purser's steward.

"Yes, Mr. Heasy, quite as good a gentleman as yourself, although I 'ave 'ad misfortunes. I ham of as hold a family as hany in the country," replied Mr. Easthupp, now backed by the boatswain. "Many the year did I walk Bond Street, and I 'ave as good blood in my weins as you, Mr. Heasy, although I 'ave been misfortunate. I've had hadmirals in my family."

"You have grossly insulted this gentleman," said Mr. Biggs, in continuation; "and, notwithstanding all your talk

CAPTAIN MARRYAT

of equality, you are afraid to give him satisfaction; you shelter yourself under your quarter-deck."

"Mr. Biggs," replied our hero, who was now very wroth, "I shall go on shore directly we arrive at Malta. Let you, and this fellow, put on plain clothes, and I will meet you both; and then I will show you whether I am afraid to give satisfaction."

"One at a time," said the boatswain.

"No, sir, not one at a time, but both at the same time, I will fight both or none. If you are my superior officer, you must descend," replied Jack, with an ironical sneer, "to meet me, or I will not descend to meet that fellow, whom I believe to have been little better than a pickpocket." . . .

Mr. Biggs, having declared he would fight, of course had to look out for a second, and he fixed upon Mr. Tallboys, the gunner, and requested him to be his friend. Mr. Tallboys, who had been latterly very much annoyed by Jack's victories over him in the science of navigation, and therefore felt ill-will toward him, consented; but he was very much puzzled how to arrange that three were to fight at the same time, for he had no idea of there being two duels; so he went to his cabin and commenced reading. Jack, on the other hand, daring not say a word to Jolliffe on the subject; indeed, there was no one in the ship to whom he could confide but Gascoigne; he therefore went to him, and, although Gascoigne thought it was excessively infra dig of Jack to meet even the boatswain; as the challenge had been given, there was no retracting, and he therefore consented, like all midshipmen, anticipating fun, and quite thoughtless of the consequences. . . .

Mr. Tallboys addressed Mr. Gascoigne, taking him apart while the boatswain amused himself with a glass of grog, and our hero sat outside, teasing a monkey.

"Mr. Gascoigne," said the gunner, "I have been very much puzzled how this duel should be fought, but I have at last found out. You see there are three parties to fight; had there been two or four there would have been no difficulty, as the right line or square might guide us in that instance; but we must arrange it upon the triangle in this."

Gascoigne stared; he could not imagine what was coming.

THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL

"Are you aware, Mr. Gascoigne, of the properties of an equilateral triangle?"

"Yes," replied the midshipman; "it has three equal sides. But what the devil has that to do with the duel?"

"Everything, Mr. Gascoigne," replied the gunner; "it has resolved the great difficulty; indeed, the duel between three can only be fought upon that principle. You observe," said the gunner, taking a piece of chalk out of his pocket and making a triangle on the table, "in this figure we have three points, each equidistant from each other; and we have three combatants; so that placing one at each point, it is all fair play for the three: Mr. Easy, for instance, stands here, the boatswain here, and the purser's steward at the third corner. Now, if the distance is fairly measured, it will be alright."

"But then," replied Gascoigne, delighted at the idea, "how are they to fire?"

"It certainly is not of much consequence," replied the gunner; "but still, as sailors, it appears to me that they should fire with the sun; that is, Mr. Easy fires at Mr. Biggs, Mr. Biggs at Mr. Easthupp, and Mr. Easthupp fires at Mr. Easy, so that you perceive that each party has his shot at one, and at the same time receives the fire of another."

Gascoigne was in ecstasies at the novelty of the proceeding, the more so as he perceived that Easy obtained every advantage of the arrangement.

"Upon my word, Mr. Tallboys, I give you great credit; you have a profound mathematical head, and I am delighted with your arrangement. Of course in these affairs the principals are bound to comply with the arrangements of the seconds, and I shall insist upon Mr. Easy consenting to your excellent and scientific proposal."

Gascoigne went out, and, pulling Jack away from the monkey, told him what the gunner had proposed, at which Jack laughed heartily.

The gunner also explained it to the boatswain, who did not very well comprehend, but replied:

"I dare say it's all right, shot for shot, and damn all favours."

CAPTAIN MARRYAT

The parties then repaired to the spot with two pairs of ship's pistols, which Mr. Tallboys had smuggled on shore; and as soon as they were on the ground the gunner called Mr. Easthupp out of the cooperage. In the meantime Gascoigne had been measuring an equilateral triangle of twelve paces, and marked it out. Mr. Tallboys, on his return with the purser's steward, went over the ground, and, finding that it was "equal angles subtended by equal sides," declared that all was right. Easy took his station, the boatswain was put into his, and Mr. Easthupp, who was quite in a mystery, was led by the gunner to the third position.

"But, Mr. Tallboys," said the purser's steward, "I don't understand this. Mr. Easy will first fight Mr. Biggs, will he not?"

"No," replied the gunner, "this is a duel of three. You will fire at Mr. Easy, Mr. Easy will fire at Mr. Biggs, and Mr. Biggs will fire at you. It is all arranged, Mr. Easthupp."

"But," said Mr. Easthupp, "I do not understand it. Why is Mr. Biggs to fire at me? I have no quarrel with Mr. Biggs."

"Because Mr. Easy fires at Mr. Biggs, and Mr. Biggs must have his shot as well."

"If you have ever been in the company of gentlemen, Mr. Easthupp," observed Gascoigne, "you must know something about duelling."

"Yes, yes, I've kept the best company, Mr. Gascoigne, and I can give a gentleman satisfaction; but——"

"Then sir, if that is the case, you must know that your honour is in the hands of your second, and that no gentleman appeals."

"Yes, yes, I know that, Mr. Gascoigne; but, still, I've no quarrel with Mr. Biggs, and therefore Mr. Biggs, of course, will not aim at me."

"Why, you don't think that I'm going to be fired at for nothing?" replied the boatswain. "No, no, I'll have my shot anyhow."

"But at your friend, Mr. Biggs?"

"All the same I shall fire at somebody; shot for shot, and hit the luckiest."

"Vel, gentlemen, I purtest against these proceedings,"

THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL

replied Mr. Easthupp. "I came here to have satisfaction from Mr. Easy, and not to be fired at by Mr. Biggs."

"Don't you have satisfaction when you fire at Mr. Easy?" replied the gunner. "What more would you have?"

"I purtest against Mr. Biggs firing at me."

"So you would have a shot without receiving one!" cried Gascoigne. "The fact is that this fellow's a confounded coward, and ought to be kicked into the cooorage again."

At this affront Mr. Easthupp rallied, and accepted the pistol offered by the gunner.

"You 'ear those words, Mr. Biggs? Pretty language to use to a gentleman! You shall 'ear from me, sir, as soon as the ship is paid off. I purtest no longer, Mr. Tallboys. Death before dishonour! I'm a gentleman, damme!"

At all events, the swell was not a very courageous gentleman, for he trembled most exceedingly as he pointed his pistol. The gunner gave the word as if he were exercising the great guns on board ship.

"Cock your locks! Take good aim at the object! Fire! Stop your vents!"

The only one of the combatants who appeared to comply with the latter supplementary order was Mr. Easthupp, who clapped his hand to his trousers behind, gave a loud yell, and then dropped down, the bullet having passed clean through his seat of honour, from his having presented his broadside as a target to the boatswain as he faced toward our hero. Jack's shot had also taken effect, having passed through both the boatswain's cheeks, without further mischief than extracting two of his best upper double teeth and forcing through the hole of the further cheek the boatswain's own quid of tobacco. As for Mr. Easthupp's ball, as he was very unsettled, and shut his eyes before he fired, it had gone the Lord knows where.

The purser's steward lay on the ground and screamed; the boatswain spit out his double teeth and two or three mouthfuls of blood, and then threw down his pistol in a rage.

"A pretty business, by God!" sputtered he. "He's put my pipe out. How the devil am I to pipe to dinner when I'm ordered, all my wind 'scaping through the cheeks?"

THE GREAT TRIANGULAR DUEL

In the meantime, the others had gone to the assistance of the purser's steward, who continued his vociferations. They examined him, and considered a wound in that part not to be dangerous.

"Hold your confounded bawling," cried the gunner, "or you'll have the guard down here. You're not hurt."

"Hain't hi!" roared the steward. "Oh, let me die! Let me die! Don't move me!"

"Nonsense!" cried the gunner, "you must get up and walk down to the boat; if you don't, we'll leave you. Hold your tongue, confound you! You won't? Then I'll give you something to halloo for."

Whereupon Mr. Tallboys commenced cuffing the poor wretch right and left, who received so many swingeing boxes of the ear that he was soon reduced to merely pitiful plaints of "Oh, dear! such inhumanity! I purtest! Oh, dear! must I get up? I can't, indeed."

"I do not think he can move, Mr. Tallboys," said Gascoigne. "I should think the best plan would be to call up two of the men from the cooperage and let them take him at once to the hospital."

The gunner went down to the cooperage to call the men, Mr. Biggs, who had bound up his face as if he had a toothache, for the bleeding had been very slight, came up to the purser's steward, exclaiming:

"What the hell are you making such a howling about? Look at me, with two shot-holes through my figurehead, while you have only got one in your stern. I wish I could change with you, hy heavens! for I could use my whistle then. Now, if I attempt to pipe, there will be such a wasteful expenditure of his Majesty's store of wind that I never shall get out a note. A wicked shot of yours, Mr. Easy."

"I really am very sorry," replied Jack, with a polite bow, "and I beg to offer my best apology."

—"Midshipman Easy."

THREE THIMBLES AND A PEA
BY GEORGE BORROW

THREE THIMBLES AND A PEA

By GEORGE BORROW

A MAN emerged from the tent, bearing before him a rather singular table. It appeared to be of white deal, was exceedingly small at the top, and with very long legs. At a few yards from the entrance he paused and looked round, as if to decide on the direction which he should take. Presently, his eye glancing on me as I lay upon the ground, he started, and appeared for a moment inclined to make off as quick as possible, table and all. In a moment, however, he seemed to recover assurance, and, coming up to the place where I was, the long legs of the table projecting before him, he cried, "Glad to see you here, my lord!"

"Thank you," said I; "it's a fine day."

"Very fine, my lord. Will your lordship play? Them that finds, wins—them that don't finds, loses."

"Play at what?" said I.

"Only at the thimble and pea, my lord."

"I never heard of such a game."

"Didn't you? Well, I'll soon teach you," said he, placing the table down. "All you have to do is to put a sovereign down on my table, and to find the pea, which I put under one of my thimbles. If you find it—and it is easy enough to find it—I give you a sovereign besides your own; for them that finds, wins."

"And them that don't find, loses," said I. "No, I don't wish to play."

"Why not, my lord?"

"Why, in the first place, I have no money."

"Oh, you have no money! That, of course, alters the case. If you have no money, you can't play. Well, I suppose I must be seeing after my customers," said he, glancing over the plain.

"Good day," said I.

"Good day," said the man slowly, but without moving,

GEORGE BORROW

and as if in reflection. After a moment or two, looking at me inquiringly, he added, "Out of employ?"

"Yes," said I, "out of employ."

The man measured me with his eye as I lay on the ground. At length he said, "May I speak a word or two to you, my lord?"

"As many as you please," said I.

"Then just come a little out of hearing, a little farther on the grass, if you please, my lord."

"Why do you call me my lord?" said I, as I arose and followed him.

"We of the thimble always calls our customers lords," said the man. "But I won't call you such a foolish name any more. Come along."

The man walked along the plain till he came to the side of a dry pit, when, looking round to see that no one was nigh, he laid his table on the grass, and, sitting down with his legs over the side of the pit, he motioned me to do the same. "So you are in want of employ?" said he, after I had sat down beside him.

"Yes," said I, "I am very much in want of employ."

"I think I can find you some."

"What kind?" said I.

"Why," said the man, 'I think you would do to be my bonnet."

"Bonnet," said I; "what is that?"

"Don't you know? However, no wonder, as you had never heard of the thimble-and-pea game; but I will tell you. We of the game are very much exposed. Folks, when they have lost their money, as those who play with us mostly do, sometimes uses rough language, calls us cheats, and sometimes knocks our hats over our eyes; and what's more, with a kick under our table, causes the top deals to fly off. This is the third table I have used this day, the other two being broken by uncivil customers. So we of the game generally like to have gentlemen go about with us to take our part, and encourage us, though pretending to know nothing about us. For example, when the customer says, 'I'm cheated,' the bonnet must say, 'No, you a'n't; it is all right.' Or when my hat is knocked over my eyes, the bonnet must square,

THREE THIMBLES AND A PEA

and say, 'I never saw the man before in all my life, but I won't see him ill-used.' And when they kicks at the table, the bonnet must say, 'I won't see the table ill-used, such a nice table, too; besides, I want to play myself.' And then I would say to the bonnet, 'Thank you, my lord, them that finds, wins.' And then the bonnet plays, and I lets the bonnet win."

"In a word," said I, "the bonnet means the man who covers you, even as the real bonnet covers the head."

"Just so," said the man; "I see you are awake, and would soon make a first-rate bonnet."

"What would the wages be?" I demanded.

"Why, to a first-rate bonnet, as I think you would prove, I could afford to give from forty to fifty shillings a week."

"Is it possible?" said I.

"Good wages, a'n't they?" said the man. . . .

"I find no fault with the wages," said I, "but I don't like the employ."

"Not like bonneting?" said the man. "Ah, I see, you would like to be principal. Well, a time may come—those long white fingers of yours would just serve for the business."

"Is it a difficult one?" I demanded.

"Why, it is not very easy. Two things are needful—natural talent and constant practice. But I'll show you a point or two connected with the game," and, placing his table between his knees as he sat over the side of the pit, he produced three thimbles, and a small brown pellet, something resembling a pea. He moved the thimble and pellet about, now placing it to all appearance under one, and now under another. "Under which is it now?" he said at last. "Under that," said I, pointing to the lowermost of the thimbles, which, as they stood, formed a kind of triangle. "No," said he, "it is not; but lift it up." And, when I lifted up the thimble, the pellet, in truth, was not under it. "It was under none of them," said he; "it was pressed by my little finger against my palm." And then he showed me how he did the trick, and asked me if the game was not a funny one; and, on my answering in the affirmative, he said, "I am glad you like it; come along and let us win some money."

Thereupon, getting up, he placed the table before him,